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# The Eschatological Garden: Sacred Space, Time and Experience in the Monastic Cloister Garden

Oh heart since time's passing grieves you  
And your pure spirit so unseasonably leaves the body,  
Sit on the green, spend a few days in happiness  
Before the green grass springs from your dust.<sup>1</sup>

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OLDURS001

"Submitted in Fulfilment of the requirements for the degree MA in Religious Studies, University of Cape Town."

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<sup>1</sup> Omar Khayyam, *The Ruba'iyat of Omar Khayyam*, trans. Peter Avery and John Heath-Stubbs (London: Penguin Books, 1979), 84: 150.

# ABSTRACT

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The argument of this dissertation is that the garden can be considered a proleptic eschatological landscape outside of time. To prove this argument I pull together strands of philosophical reflections on death, history of religions analysis concerning sacred space and time and monastic spirituality. I develop this argument by focusing on the enclosed garden, which has connected with it, in myth and metaphor, abundant meanings concerning life after death in a paradisiacal state of bliss. These meanings also become evident in the physical layout of the garden, which, when analyzing it in terms of substantial and situational definitions of sacred space, becomes a prime example of a sacred space, linked physically and symbolically to an eschatological space. The enclosed garden plays a very important role in monastic spirituality as it is not only associated with the cloister, but also with the Virgin Mary, which both offer the monk a gateway to eternity in Paradise. Physically the enclosed garden becomes the very center of the monastic precinct, offering through a ritual-sensory experience of its spatial qualities an experience which allows the monk a moment of spiritual transcendence. It is also, thus, in this moment, when the monk's physical experience of the garden is woven together with ideas of paradise as an abode of eternity, that the garden becomes a sacred space which can lift him outside of time to experience paradisiacal happiness. This requires a process of hermeneutical interpretation from the monk and the theorist reflecting on this encounter. It is a dialogue between the garden and its interpreters, which leads to the conclusion that an encounter with the sacred never stands in isolation.

# PREFACE

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Gardens through history have always played some role in man's thoughts about the world and man's place in it. Gardens deal with transformation, changeability and even uncertainty, which give them a certain quality that fills an observer with awe and wonder. Even though, they are sources of pleasure and enjoyment, underlying these experiences of happiness there is always the knowledge that this experience is but an illusion and that this brief moment, where nature's flux is transfixed and order is transposed, is only fleeting. It is, however, an illusion that gives hope and as such the garden becomes the perfect allegory for man's own cycle of life and death. The garden as symbol of eternal change becomes, in that same moment, also the symbol of the ultimate reward, a place of harmony and tranquility where the ravages of time is brought to an end and man can find eternal peace.

At this stage I want to qualify my usage of "man" as a generic term in this thesis. The garden shows us that change is a quintessential part of life. Similarly, within the world of academia, terminology changes, rendering certain formulations archaic. Today, much emphasis is placed on gender inclusive language. However, to create a sense of fluidity linking past philosophers and scholars to their modern counterparts, though still fully aware of their multiple differences historically and conceptually, I have stuck to the usage of the term "man". I need, thus, to make it clear that I have used this term without attributing any gender quality of maleness to it. Instead, I have used it as a broad term including all humanity.

In this thesis I will show how the garden, in its very ability to create boundaries, while simultaneously going beyond them, becomes a sacred space, filled with ideas of hope and happiness. I will argue that the garden becomes a vehicle for transcendence in its ability to pull the observer into an experience that relies on all the senses, which in a specific moment in time enables him/her to move beyond those barriers and experience fulfillment.

It is, however, a project that I could not have attempted on my own and without the support of others. Therefore:

**No other answer can I give but thanks, And thanks again.<sup>1</sup>**

**To:**

My husband whose enthusiasm never faltered. He was my sounding board, my inspiration and my confidant.

My children, who believed in me, encouraged me and were proud of me.

My daughter Lourie, who was saddled with printing and binding the thesis.

My friend Gell, who shares my love of gardens, listened to my ideas and gave advice.

Professor David Chidester, without whose knowledge and insight, all this would have been in vain.

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<sup>1</sup> William Shakespeare. *Twelfth Night: A Verse Translation*, Kent Richmond (Lakewood: Full Measure Press, 2004), 89.



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<sup>2</sup> Illustration by Ian Penney [www.ianpenney.co.uk/gallery1/cloister.htm](http://www.ianpenney.co.uk/gallery1/cloister.htm) accessed 28 April 2009.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

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For, in fact, what is man in nature? A Nothing in comparison with the Infinite, an All in comparison with the Nothing, a mean between nothing and everything. Since he is infinitely removed from comprehending the extremes, the end of things and their beginning are hopelessly hidden from him in an impenetrable secret; he is equally incapable of seeing the Nothing from which he was made, and the Infinite in which he is swallowed up.

All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end.

We desire truth, and find within ourselves only uncertainty.

We seek happiness, and find only misery and death.<sup>1</sup>

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Let me define a garden as the meeting of raw nature and the human imagination in which both seek the fulfillment of their beauty.<sup>2</sup>

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More than anything else, a garden is a portal, a passage into another world, one of your own thoughts and your own making; it is whatever you want it to be and you are what you want to be.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Blaise Pascal, *Pensees* (New York: Kessinger), 15, 97, 107.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Moore, *The Re-Enchantment of Everyday Life* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1996), 96.

<sup>3</sup> William Longgood, *Voices from the Earth: A Year in the Life of a Garden* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), 10.





“A garden”, wrote the Persian poet Sa’di, “is a delight to the eye, and a solace to the soul; it soothes angry passions, and produces that pleasure which is a foretaste of paradise”.<sup>5</sup> This thesis is about a garden. As in any garden it draws upon many factors in its creation and exploration. All great gardens evolve from an idea, which is what you want your garden to say, into the interpretation of that idea by means of design and design elements. However, the success of any garden relies in the end on how well it stimulates the senses while simultaneously offering the possibility for repose and reflection.

Similarly, the garden in this thesis is based upon an idea of an enclosed garden existing on many planes, physically and imaginary. These ideas are explored in terms of philosophical reflections on death and time, discourses in the history of

<sup>4</sup> The Enclosed Garden, published by Simon Arrebola (Spanish artist part of art group: *La Paciencia del Buey*) Series: Tota Pulchra <http://simonarrebola.blogspot>, accessed 3 March 2008. “What is enclosed in this garden is personality and identity. The metaphor of the world irrigated by water symbolizes continued growth, evolution and transformation. This is a space for the production of identity of knowing who you are”.

<sup>5</sup> Sa’di, quoted in Alfred H. Hyatt, *From a Middlesex Garden: A Book of Garden Thoughts* (New York: Kessinger, 1901). 87.

religions focusing on sacred space and sacred time, and bringing to the fore monastic spirituality and sensory experience.

Seasonal changes in a garden focus the mind on beginnings and endings, the never-ending cycle of life and death. Exploring these themes, together with thoughts on truth and happiness, I engage with existentialist philosophers such as Miguel de Unamuno, Nicolai Berdyaev, Martin Heidegger, Martin Buber and Søren Kierkegaard. By looking at their theories on what it means to be living an authentically meaningful life and linking these ideas on truth and happiness to an aesthetic appreciation of the garden, I consider John Dewey and Arthur Schopenhauer's theories of art and aesthetical experiences, together with Hans-George Gadamer and Lindsay Jones's deliberations on hermeneutical interpretation, in assessing how the garden can be considered a tool for achieving ideals of transcendence.

Although, every garden is unique and open to interpretation its underlying symbolism will most often be universal, even then, for its meaning to become clear it requires specific knowledge of the applicable codes and symbols related to those particular garden archetypes. For a detailed analysis of the enclosed garden I rely on Rob Aben and Saskia de Wit's very thorough study of the enclosed garden in all its aspects. However, interpreting and understanding the underlying symbolism and meaning of the enclosed garden as a vehicle for transcendence, I deliberate upon definitions of the sacred and sacred space as propounded by History of Religion scholars such as Gerardus van der Leeuw, Mircea Eliade, David Chidester and Beldon Lane. Their definitions of the sacred and sacred space, together with the views of Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka on inner sacredness and Michel Foucault and Henri Lefebvre on the production of space, are woven

together with other scholars of space and place such as Edward Casey, Yi-Fu Tuan, E.V. Walter and J.E. Malpas to create a rich tapestry of narratives on the enclosed garden as a unique space open for interpretation.

Gardens stimulate the senses and entice participation. Focusing on the monastic cloister garden, I look at sense experiences in the garden incorporating Mary Carruthers, Megan Cassidy Welch, Susan Ashbrook Harvey and Janet Coleman's studies on the use of the senses as memory tools in medieval Christianity, as well as Malcolm Quantrill's theories on environmental memory and haptic perception. Participation in the garden becomes the focus of a monastic spirituality of reform, whereby I refer to Pierre Hadot and his views on spiritual exercises, to finally conclude that the enclosed garden of the monastery can be considered a vehicle for transcendence.

My thesis is that the enclosed garden is an anticipatory, or proleptic, eschatological landscape outside of time. However, considering the enclosed garden as such a landscape provides challenges when trying to set the scope of its parameters. Arguing that the garden is a specific landscape opening itself up towards transcending death implies the consideration of the garden as sacred space, requiring a clear sense of what is to be understood by such a sacred space. Focusing on the eschatological aspect of the statement requires an insight into the myths and symbols related to man's own understanding of life after death. On the other hand, isolating the garden only as a symbol or metaphor of an eschatological landscape limits its very proleptic or anticipating quality, which can only be found in experience. The greatest challenge, though, lies in grasping that the essence of the argument is in fact situated in understanding the value of the moment.

As Gerardus van der Leeuw so clearly states:

The spatiality of time, further brings with it a homogeneity; we count the hours and seconds – regard them, that is to say as equivalent things. But they are neither things, nor perfectly alike: this they become only in space. Homogeneous time thus measured in hours, days and years, therefore, is only a symbol of real time, of “duration”: but in duration itself every moment has its own value.<sup>6</sup>

It is thus clear that to fully prove that the garden can be considered a proleptic eschatological landscape outside of time, is to understand the garden not only as a sacred space or as a metaphorical symbol of the afterlife, but as an opening towards transcendence originating within the moment. The same moment also found in Schopenhauer’s moment of aesthetic or mystical experience, where time becomes a source of knowledge leading to the understanding of the meaning of life.

For at the moment when, torn from the will, we have given ourselves up to pure, will-less knowing, we have stepped into another world, so to speak, where everything that moves our will, and thus violently agitates us, no longer exists. This liberation of knowledge lifts us as wholly and completely above all this as do sleep and dreams. Happiness and unhappiness have vanished; we are no longer the individual; that is forgotten; we are only pure subject of knowledge.<sup>7</sup>

Happiness, the ultimate good, beauty and truth are all concepts which have been used to define man’s ultimate purpose in life. Man is thought to be continuously on a quest to give meaning to his life, he is endlessly trying to transcend his mundane existence in his pursuit of the Ultimate. According to Wittgenstein, an unhappy life is connected to the frustration, fear and meaninglessness which confront man in this pursuit of happiness and this unhappiness is indirectly linked to man’s desire and will. Man’s unhappiness is not only caused by the frustration of his desires, but also

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<sup>6</sup> Gerardus van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation: A Study in Phenomenology*. Vol. 2, trans. J.E. Turner (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 384.

<sup>7</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*. Vol. 1, trans. E.F.J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1969), 169, 197-198.

by the possibility that the road to fulfillment of these desires is wrought with obstacles, hindering their very fulfillment. Wittgenstein consequently posits that the intervention of death between desire and fulfillment causes the fear of death to be the main characteristic of an unhappy life.

In Wittgenstein's arguments, immortality after death, even if that would be the maximum desire of man, is weighed down with dread.<sup>8</sup> He argues that even the thought of such a life has intuitively associated with it the fear that it could be meaningless. For him the ideas of an eternal life, "the temporal immortality of the human soul, that is to say, its eternal survival after death, is not only in no way guaranteed, but this assumption in the first place will not do for us what we always tried to make it do. Is a riddle solved by the fact that I survive forever? Is this eternal life not as enigmatic as our present one? The solution of the riddle of life in space and time lies *outside* space and time".<sup>9</sup> Therefore, according to him, to lead a happy life is to understand the meaning of life and this understanding will only be obtained when the riddle of eternal life is solved.<sup>10</sup>

The Spanish Philosopher, Miguel De Unamuno, wrote in his illuminating book, *Tragic Sense of Life*, that "Man will never willingly abandon his attempt to form a concrete

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<sup>8</sup> Roger Paden, *Mysticism and Architecture: Wittgenstein and the Meaning of the Palais Stenborough* (Plymouth: Lexington Book, 2007), 104. He also explains Wittgenstein's notion of happiness as a transcendental state which according to Wittgenstein's philosophy of language is ineffable and not explainable, therefore, requiring a special kind of language. It should be noted, however, that in Wittgenstein's statement that the riddle of life is to be found outside of time, his thoughts are turning to God, for he was an ethical, religious thinker who believed that only by doing the will of God a person could lead a happy life. See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Notebooks: 1914 -1916* (Oxford: The University of Chicago Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1979), 74e-75e.

<sup>9</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. C.K. Ogden, introduction Bernard Russell Mineola (New York: Dover, 1999). 6. 4312.

<sup>10</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), 152-158, argues that man's passionate interest in immortality is a condition of human existence. This desire is a response to the human understanding that there is an end to temporal existence and it is a desire for meaning. To fulfill the demand being human places on a person is the pursuit of subjective truths, the "absolute telos" of human existence.

representation of the other life".<sup>11</sup> He continues his argument by posing the question whether an eternal and endless life after death is indeed possible, or even thinkable. Personal immortality, according to him, becomes only thinkable when it is considered under the same forms of this earthly and transitory life.

Unamuno experienced a deep tension between the hope of every man for everlasting life and the inability of man's reason to apprehend that which lies beyond death.<sup>12</sup> He understood the possibility of life after death as two-fold. It either promises the living-on of the person in the flesh, as found in the religious beliefs of Christianity, or else the living-on of the individual in the spirit by leaving behind a legacy, to be remembered by others. Unamuno thought both of these possibilities as having equal importance, as not one or the other could satisfy his longing for immortality. Physiological immortality is, Unamuno believed, not enough since man also desires his soul to be immortal, socially and in history.

The essence of this idea comes very poignantly to the fore when the famous travel writer Colin Thubron recalls a Chinese peasant's thoughts on death:

Then he said with the sudden, paradoxical sparseness of his people: "I'm afraid of death. And loneliness. When I close my eyes, I go cold. I think: death is like this. Blackness, where there is no feel or taste. Many young people are afraid of it, I think. Old people can look back on rich lives, perhaps and not be afraid.... But we young people are unfulfilled, and afraid. Some of my friends goes to the Buddhist temple, but only because they want something. I don't believe in that. For us, after death, there is nothing."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Miguel De Unamuno, *Tragic Sense of Life*, trans. J.E. Crawford Flitch (New York: Dover, 1954), 223.

<sup>12</sup> Mary Lyndon Shanley, in her essay, "Miguel de Unamuno: Death & Politics in the Work of a Twentieth-Century Philosopher," *Polity*, 9.3 (Spring 1977): 259-261, writes that Unamuno was hounded by a fear of death and that his life was one long search for some assurance that his own consciousness would survive death; to achieve some knowledge that death is not the supreme end of individual existence.

<sup>13</sup> Colin Thubron, *Shadow of the Silk Road* (London: Vintage Books, 2006), 13.

Unamuno concludes his arguments with the statement that people need to believe in that other life, perhaps in order that they may deserve it, or in order that they may obtain it, for it may be that they who neither deserves it, nor will obtain it, are those who do “not passionately desire it above reason, and if need be against reason”.<sup>14</sup>

This conviction in another life argued Aldous Huxley can only be thought of as survival. It implies in some way persistence in one of the forms of time as humans “find themselves, by law of their own transcended nature, compelled to choose some purgatorial or embodied servitude even more painful than the one they have just left”. For him immortality can only be obtained by the participation in the eternal now of the divine, immortality is the result of total deliverance.<sup>15</sup>

This participation in the now of the divine, resulting in total deliverance, points to a mystical experience. An experience which, as Wittgenstein has argued, involves a vision of a hidden reality, to see the world simultaneously limited but structured with meaning. Consequently, in his view, a person can only transcend his desires by means of a mystical experience, similar to an aesthetical experience, where the subject’s consciousness is wholly taken up by the object he is contemplating. It is only then that his experience transcends time and space as the object is seen “together with space and time instead of space and time”.<sup>16</sup> For Schopenhauer the aesthetic moment is not only disconnected from the passage of time, but is also in itself free of the form of time and as such it is eternal. It is only then that a person will find his true being.

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<sup>14</sup> De Unamuno, *Tragic Sense of Life*, 258.

<sup>15</sup> Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (New York: Perennial Classics, 1944), 211.

<sup>16</sup> Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, 7-8.10.16 [83e].

An important element in solving the riddle of immortality is, according to Aziz Esmail, found in interpretation.<sup>17</sup> For him interpretation implies a bounded space where the attention is also drawn to that which it is not, a space beyond. It implies a wider human experience, an experience of life as simultaneously open and closed. Men, according to him, are creatures with a sense of the infinite, a sense of freedom. The result of that freedom is their capability of transcending the here and now by means of forward imagination and effort.

This effort of the imagination leads to the establishment of a symbolic core, which is the embodiment of a specific world view or culture enclosed in its own traditions, institutions, codes of doctrine and rules of behavior. This symbolic core becomes a reflection of life itself, in its finiteness it manifests the irreversibility of time and the certainty of death but it also conveys an openness in its expression of hope, faith and the achievement of the ideal. Esmail describes these symbols as expressing an “ideal resolution to life” which are seldom realized in actual experience and calls it a “horizon idea”, which offers an alternative to death being the “last word on the question of meaning of life”.<sup>18</sup> They provide narratives of life after death and become “symbolizations of existence in the here and now”. The very symbolic character of these conceptions, according to him, gives rise to a poetics, a special language of symbols and metaphors, whose meanings only become clear by means of exploration and interpretation.

All modes of interpretation, as Esmail clearly states, should be open-ended, taking into account that even within a tradition there is a continuous activity of

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<sup>17</sup> Aziz Esmail, originally trained in philosophy, literature and religion, is the former Dean of The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London (1988-98) and, since 1998, has served as one of its Governors.

<sup>18</sup> Aziz Esmail, *The Poetics of Religious Experience: The Islamic Context* (London: I.B. Tauris.1998), 8.



reinterpretation of narratives and symbols.<sup>19</sup> It should clearly be understood, using Esmail's words, that the "nucleus of values which give character and identity to a tradition is not exhausted by the intellectual, moral and practical system it may be embodied at a given time". The symbolic core of a tradition is never static but even within its own boundaries it is constantly in a process of reinterpretation, re-working and re-making, not merely in terms of the old but also in terms of the new.<sup>20</sup>

This symbolic core becomes the nucleus of those patterns of transcendence, which David Chidester calls mythic transcendence. Quoting the Freudian psychologist Robert Jay Lifton, Chidester argues that these patterns of transcendence are important in the human experience of death because they provide a coping mechanism for dealing with the thought of death. For him mythic transcendence involves the ways in which humans imagine personal survival after death in some type of afterlife and is found in those stories, visions and expectations "that imaginatively transform death into a transition to another realm of experience".<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Esmail, *The Poetics of Religious Experience*, 4-6.

See also Eric Voegelin's excellent essay "Immortality: Experience and Symbol," *Harvard Theological Review*, 60, 3 (July 1967): 235-279. Although writing on immortality from a political philosophical viewpoint, he offers some thoughtful insights on immortality as a language symbol that is engendered by what he calls "a class of experiences to which we refer as the varieties of religious experience" to convey an experienced truth. These symbols, however, do not refer to objects in time and space but informs about a truth found in a nonexistent reality. Furthermore, the mode of nonexistence pertains also to the experience itself as it is "nothing but a consciousness of participation in nonexistent reality".

<sup>20</sup> Lindsay Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison. Vol. 1 Reflections on the Eventfulness of Religious Architecture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 4 claims that by means of a hermeneutical reflection, narratives and symbols of a specific tradition, situated in the past, are interpreted and given meaning in the present. He describes this hermeneutical reflection as crisis driven, because it arises from the encounter with otherness and as such becomes a disciplined exercise of the imagination, where distant meanings are brought closer in an effort to make sense of them.

<sup>21</sup> David Chidester, *Patterns of Transcendence: Religion Death and Dying* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1990), 13-30, 21. He argues that mythic transcendence can be divided into two ways of symbolizing the continuity of a person, cognitive (survival of a continuous conscience or memory) and forensic continuity (personal responsibility of actions and their consequences). In Christianity, mythic transcendence centers on resurrection; the person survives by being born again in the same recognizable form, even though the body may be transformed or spiritualized.

It is, thus, also as part of the religious discourse of mythic transcendence that this thesis in its endeavor to prove the enclosed garden as a proleptic eschatological landscape outside of time will be located. As a pattern of transcendence it will be argued that the enclosed garden, to use David Chidester's words: "give[s] a certain shape to life, organize[s] priorities and orient[s] human beings toward issues of ultimate meaning, significance and urgency".<sup>22</sup> Testing this argument, however, the enclosed garden needs to be placed within a specific tradition that can act as a conceptual frame of reference. Therefore, this thesis will locate the enclosed garden within the framework of the monastic cloister garden where it will be considered in terms of a metaphorical symbol of the afterlife, sacred space, and a locus for a sensio-religious experience originating within the moment.

Douglas J. Davies points out that in Christianity, as in most religions, death is treated as a gateway to the fulfillment of life's meaning, man's final destiny. Seeing that the world they live in is filled with unfulfilled desires, this new world in which they see fulfillment is an ideal world in which happiness, the ultimate good, beauty and truth exist in all their fullness.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Mario Jacoby argues that the myth of Paradise is the longing for a place or condition of bliss and that the self is forever trying to close the gap that separates the self from it. He states that man is continually trying to close the gap between the present time and a time outside of time.<sup>24</sup> For man, heaven is not a static, dull and monochrome entity.

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<sup>22</sup> Chidester, *Patterns of Transcendence*, 13.

<sup>23</sup> Douglas, J. Davies, "Death and Afterlife" in *Life after Death: A History of the Afterlife in Western Religion*, Alan F. Segal, ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 229-238.

<sup>24</sup> Mario Jacoby, *Longing for Paradise: Psychological Perspectives on an Archetype* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1985), 215. See also Colleen McDannell and Bernard Lang, *Heaven: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988). Alister E. McGrath, *A Brief History of Heaven* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003). Alan F. Segal, ed. *Life after Death: A History of the Afterlife in Western Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 2004).

Heaven, in the words of Russell is:

an endless dynamic of joy in which one is ever more oneself as one was meant to be, in which one increasingly realizes one's potential in understanding as well as love and is filled more and more with wisdom. It is the discovery, sometimes unexpected, of one's deepest self. Heaven is a reality itself; what is not heaven is less real.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, in view of Miguel De Unamuno's observation that man is forever attempting to form concrete representations of the other life, this ideal world, in an anticipation of a time to come, a time after death, Christianity has throughout the ages explored the visualization of those eschatological myths by means of a rich literary topos filled with metaphors and symbols, in which the idea and image of garden features prominently. Gardens have special meanings as they are potent settings for human life, transcending time, place and culture. All through history gardens were symbols of an idealized order of nature and culture; since the beginning of time they have been records of a society's private beliefs and public values.<sup>26</sup>

The garden has often been interpreted as the balancing tip between wild nature and the dangers associated with it on the one hand and the safety offered by human control of nature on the other. On these terms it could be understood as nature-under-control, an idealization of what society at that moment in time thought nature should be, or look like. It is also, then, in terms of presenting the ideal world that the garden plays a major role in various religious traditions.<sup>27</sup> In many religious traditions

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<sup>25</sup> Jeffrey Burton Russell, *A History of Heaven: The Singing Silence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 3, 4.

<sup>26</sup> Mark Francis and Randolph T. Hester, Jr. eds., *The Meaning of Gardens* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990), 2-14.

<sup>27</sup> A beautifully illustrated book on gardens and the afterlife is: John Ashton and Tom Whyte, *The Quest for Paradise: Visions of Heaven and Eternity in the World's Myths and Religions* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001).

the garden represents, sometimes together, sometimes separately, ideas of paradise, harmony, temptation, sin and redemption.

The garden, particularly the Enclosed Garden, lends itself very effectively to a symbolic, metaphorical reconstruction of an ideal world. Jeffrey B. Russell talks of a “metaphorical ontology” which can be understood as the use of those symbols that penetrates the very essence of things and points to a deeper reality.<sup>28</sup> The Enclosed Garden is not only a physical place filled with objects, plants and materials. It is a specific place expressing the ideals and values of its time while simultaneously offering, by means of interpretation, a deeper multilayered understanding of the production of sacred space and sacred art.

When trying to understand the garden as a proleptic eschatological landscape outside of time, offering the hope of glimpsing eternity, it is essential that the garden should be understood as “an ecology of interrelated and connected thoughts, spaces, activities and symbols”.<sup>29</sup> Only when the garden exists simultaneously as an idea, place and action can it transcend all boundaries and will it, as representation, offer itself up to interpretation. William H. Adams very astutely observes that these gardens imply in their very essence a mythology, a theology and metaphysics.<sup>30</sup>

This requires a hermeneutical interpretation of the garden on two levels; firstly, recognizing what Lindsay Jones calls the “indigenous experience” of the superabundant symbolic meaning of sacred architecture, which occurs during those occasions in which the person interact with the garden; and secondly, the “academic” interpretation of those experiences of sacred architecture such as a

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<sup>28</sup> Russell, *A History of Heaven*, 8.

<sup>29</sup> Francis and Hester, Jr. eds., *The Meaning of Gardens*, 2.

<sup>30</sup> William Howard Adams, *Nature Perfected: Gardens Through History* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991), 17.

garden.<sup>31</sup> It is, therefore, necessary at this stage, to pause for a moment on the concept of hermeneutical interpretation.

Hermeneutical interpretation, according to Gadamer, bridges the distance between minds and reveals the foreignness of the other mind. This is, however, not merely a process of “reconstructing historically the “world” in which the work had its original meaning and function. It also means apprehending what is said to us, which is always more than declared and comprehended meaning”. For him there is a double foreignness in the task of understanding as it is not merely understanding on one level, but also asks for an understanding of the deeper „unsaid“ level.<sup>32</sup> Lindsay Jones describes this as an elusive process which simultaneously beckons for understanding while withholding the abundance of meaning. It is conjoined familiarity and foreignness that give rise to hermeneutical enquiry.

Gadamer believes there is a kind of anticipation of meaning that guides the effort to understand from the very beginning. In his exposition of the hermeneutical process he, furthermore, emphasizes that it is especially works of art that become more than just an anticipation of meaning. Works of art offer more a surprise at the meaning found in them. “The experience of art does not understand a recognizable meaning, as historical hermeneutics does in its handling of texts. The work of art that says something confronts us itself. That is, it expresses something in such a way that what is said is like a discovery, a disclosure of something previously concealed. The element of surprise is based on this”.

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<sup>31</sup> Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture*, 9.

<sup>32</sup> Hans Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. and ed. David E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 100-101.

Therefore, a work of art evokes a mysterious intimacy that speaks to us most directly. It grips our entire being as “if there were no distance at all and every encounter with it were an encounter with ourselves”.<sup>33</sup> It is in the reality of the work of art that its expressive power can be found. It is not restricted to its original historical horizon, but always has its own present. Therefore, a work of art is an expression of a truth; it communicates itself and as such is always open to new interpretations and understandings. For Gadamer the real meaning of a work of art is what it is able to say beyond any historical confinement and in this sense it occupies a timeless present.

Works of art not only make statements, they also demand interpretation. The garden, as work of art, must say something, ask for interpretation and tell us something original.<sup>34</sup> The enclosed cloister garden arouses feelings, generates ideas and is filled with meaning as it presents “things more clearly and characteristically by emphasizing the essential and eliminating the inessential”.<sup>35</sup>

John Dixon Hunt states that the garden as an art of milieu is a site that exists both as a physical object and as a place experienced by the subject. Gardens can be conceived or perceived in the abstract, which is their ontology or essence, while simultaneously, though perhaps paradoxically, this composed perception of gardens takes place in many different ways by different people and different cultures and periods. He argues that the garden as a medium has been found in recordings of the earliest civilizations and that widely different “cultural systems have invoked gardens

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<sup>33</sup> Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 95.

<sup>34</sup> Stephanie Ross, “Garden’s Powers,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 33.3 (Autumn 1999): 4-17. See also Mara Miller, *The Garden as an Art* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1993), 177-179. She underlines the difficulties in establishing gardens as works of art. Especially of interest are her observations that a garden provides an environment for experience, rather than being an object of experience, therefore questioning the foundation of the aesthetic experience.

<sup>35</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*. Vol. 2, trans. E.F.J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1969), 379.

in their sustaining narratives and have elaborated myths of garden creation and garden consumption”.<sup>36</sup>

A garden can, thus, reflect, answer or even create specific human needs and concerns. This recurrence makes the garden an archetype, “a continuing and recognizable concept, yet subject to constant reinterpretation”. Opening itself up to hermeneutical interpretation, therefore, the garden has a “*horizon of meaning*: a specific or indefinite multiplicity of meanings, a shifting of hierarchy in which now one, now another meaning comes momentarily to the fore, by means of – and for the sake of – a particular action”.<sup>37</sup>

The next three chapters of this thesis will focus on the garden as an evocative site for interpretation existing concurrently as idea, place and action. Firstly, as an idea the garden has been part of traditional and modern thought for it serves as a source of thinking about culture, nature and their influence on one another. It has an abundance of archetypal associations rich with metaphorical and symbolic connotations. Secondly, interpreting the garden as a sacred space, filled with abundant meanings, requires a mode of thinking that recognizes that the locus of meaning does not reside only in the garden itself, or in the mind of the beholder, but as Lindsay Jones has argued, in the “*ritual-architectural event* in which buildings or garden and human participants alike are involved. Meaning is not a condition or quality of the building, of the thing itself; meaning arises from situations. The

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<sup>36</sup> John Dixon Hunt, *Greater Perfections: The Practice of Garden Theory* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 13-15.

<sup>37</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 222. See also his introduction on page 33, of a triad found in the production of space: Spatial practice, the production and reproduction of specific spatial sets characteristic of each social formation. Representations of space are concerned with the relations of the production and ordering of those relations. Representational spaces, embodies a complex symbolism, a lived space through its associated symbols and images. Looking at the garden through these lenses only strengthens the argument of the Enclosed Garden offering itself up to multiple readings. Conceptualized space and linked to the knowledge, signs and codes.

meaning of a building, then, must always be a meaning for some specific one at some time in some specific place".<sup>38</sup>

Thirdly, the garden as a source of action and locus for experience requires close and intimate participation. Michael Conan talks of a bodily engagement with the materiality of the garden.<sup>39</sup> John Dewey explains:

The expressiveness of the object is the report and celebration of the complete fusion of what we undergo and what our activity of attentive perception brings into what we receive by means of the senses...The moments when the creature is both most alive and most composed and concentrated are those of fullest intercourse with the environment, in which sensuous material and relations are most completely merged.<sup>40</sup>

The power of the garden, conversely, lies in the fact that in the experience of the garden one not only partakes of its sensory pleasures; the garden simultaneously evokes complex ideas and feelings which, by means of a passive contemplative experience, make the garden timeless. Even though, as Dewey states, the focal point is in the here and now of the physical garden its scope is indefinite in its total setting. This becomes, according to Dewey, a mystical experience in the "degree in which the sense, the feeling, of the unlimited envelope becomes intense...We are never wholly free of a something that lies beyond".<sup>41</sup> Similarly to Schopenhauer, Dewey agrees that in the moment of an intense aesthetic experience, that moment presents a unique chance of momentary freedom from the forms of bounded knowledge. Time becomes a form of knowledge, which belongs to the individual subject and as such it is a form of perception. Only when perceiving the garden fully will we leave behind our individuality and all normal forms of knowledge, becoming

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<sup>38</sup> Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture*, 41.

<sup>39</sup> Michael Conan, ed., *Contemporary Garden Aesthetics: Creations and Interpretations* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2007), 12.

<sup>40</sup> John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Berkeley, 1934), 107.

<sup>41</sup> Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 156, 201.



pure subjects of knowledge. For Schopenhauer the “beginning and end of the world are to be sought not without us, but rather within”, in the moment of transcendental experience.<sup>42</sup>

All these elements are also found in the *Hortus Conclusus* which becomes the focus of chapter two. In this chapter I argue that the enclosed garden does not only exist as a metaphorical idea, it is also a physical place, but a place where the boundaries between sacred and profane are often blurred. As physical place it engages the senses while simultaneously allowing for an aesthetical or mystical experience. By using Henri Lefebvre’s theory of produced space I will show that the enclosed garden has developed into a symbol associated with peace and happiness and as such has become the ideal representation of paradise. Michel Foucault’s speculations on duplicated representation add to this argument, pointing the way forward to understanding how the physical layout of the enclosed garden can become more than an idea of Paradise, but a view of Paradise itself. With the help of Edward S. Casey’s arguments concerning liminal space I claim that the enclosed garden exists within a framework which attributes to it a liminality and, hence, allows for its physical features to be understood as transcending boundaries and opening new worlds. Using spatial metaphors such as threshold and horizon I make a case for the enclosed garden to be interpreted, not only as an archetype of paradise, but as a microcosm of a larger macrocosm, wherein sensory and mystical experience simultaneously bounds and expands the soul of the observer.

Chapter three narrows the scope of the enclosed garden to focus only on the monastic cloister garden. In this chapter I concentrate on the medieval cloister garden, where after a brief overview of monastic gardening, I discuss the cloister

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<sup>42</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*. Vol. 1, 421.

garden as a representation of Paradise on earth. Gerardus van der Leeuw's statement that man constructs for himself a world becomes the essence of my argument that the monk, in the cloister, constructs for himself a world where he can transcend his physical boundaries and experience Paradise. Within this earthly world and linked to the symbolism associated with the Virgin Mary the enclosed garden becomes a gateway that allows the monk entrance into another world, the Kingdom of God. For the monk the enclosed garden becomes a sacred space, but using Megan Cassidy-Welch's study of Medieval Cistercian thought I also illustrate that the enclosed cloister garden becomes sacred space because of its physical position, its creation of boundaries and the role it plays in the monk's daily ritual routine.

Chapter four concentrates on the monastic garden as a locus for experience, sensory as well as spiritually. In this chapter I present the reader with some philosophical understandings of time and transformation. The enclosed garden becomes the perfect vehicle to explore qualities of movement, regeneration, beginnings and endings. Basing my analysis on Gerhardt Lardner's idea of reform in Monasticisms and Pierre Hadot's arguments concerning spiritual exercises I look at the enclosed monastic garden as a source for spiritual transformation. The cloister garden stripped to its bare essentials opens up another dimension of sensory experiences with an emphasis on movement and progression. However, this movement enables all the senses to experience, simultaneously, something bigger than the self which allows for time, at that specific moment, to be experienced as standing still and eternity to be perceived.

The cloister garth draws within itself all the qualities of an enclosed garden and as a result it is possible to analyze it in terms of an interactive space, fully participating in

a personal reworking and remaking process of transcendence.<sup>43</sup> It is only then that the enclosed garden can be fully understood as a proleptic eschatological landscape outside of time, along with the realization, that ultimately, the search for the Infinite lies not outside but inside the self. It is found in that moment when past, present and future comes together in a single reality of bliss. It is life lived in the moment, according to Aldous Huxley, because the present moment is the only opening through which the soul can pass out of time into eternity and happiness can pass out of eternity into the soul.<sup>44</sup>

Chapter five concludes that just as the gardens of paradise, in myth and metaphor, are construed as physical places filled with earthly delights which can be experienced by the senses, the enclosed garden portrays, spiritually, sensory and spatially the infinite nature of an eschatological space. In this chapter I stress that the enclosed garden is „multivocal“, which grants fluidity to the garden, enabling it to be interpreted as a liminal space open to multiple understandings.<sup>45</sup> In the garden’s ability to change the landscapes of the mind it becomes not only a work of art, but an epistemology, an epistemology steeped in a full understanding of the value of the moment. In the words of Seyyed Hossein Nasr: “The present moment is the only gateway in this life to the abode of Eternity because this moment stands already outside of time and “is” in principle already in the Eternal Realm”.<sup>46</sup> In this role, I

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<sup>43</sup> Sylvia Landsberg, *The Medieval Garden* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 35, explains the cloister garth as the lawn that lay at the heart of the monastery, alongside the church. It was the area the monks processed at regular intervals during the day and night. She claims that there is no evidence in English monastic records that this area was covered with anything other than turf, with the occasional symbolic pine or Jupiter. Sometimes there were crossed paths, but there was always water in the form of a fountain or washing place.

<sup>44</sup> Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*, 188.

<sup>45</sup> Appropriating Victor Turner’s phrase. In *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1967), 29-30 Turner explains ritual symbols as having different levels of meanings occurring at the same time.

<sup>46</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Knowledge and The Sacred* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), 166.

conclude that the enclosed garden becomes a vehicle for transcendence and it is by anticipating that which lingers outside of time, but still existing within the boundaries of time, that it can be understood as an epiphany.<sup>47</sup>



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<sup>47</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*, trans. and ed. Reidar Thomte (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 86-88, argues that moment signifies the present as that which does not have a past or future, similarly to the eternal, thus “the present is eternal, or rather the eternal is the present and the present is full”. For him the moment is a beautiful word as “Nothing is as swift as the blink of an eye, and yet it is commensurable with the content of the eternal”.

<sup>48</sup> Colour Copy of Enclosed Garden Series: Tota Pulchra <http://simonarrebola.blogspot>, accessed 3 March 2008.

# CHAPTER TWO

## The Enclosed Garden

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The *hortus conclusus* is a veritable stage where “the immeasurable wealth of relationships between things” is enacted. A distilling flask in which spiritual and bodily love, church allegory and alchemy - under high pressure or in vacuum - engage first in one way and then in another, the intention being to relieve God of the key of wisdom.<sup>1</sup>

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We may have to learn again the mystery of the garden: how its external characteristics model the heart itself, and how the soul is a garden enclosed, our own perpetual paradise where we can be refreshed and restored.<sup>2</sup>

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The handsome wide border is the garden wall  
Protecting, preserving the Park within  
For refuge and renewal: a magic space  
For concourse, music and rejoicing,  
For contemplation's lonely spell-  
Conversations grave, or lover's shy discourse.<sup>3</sup>

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But to the Eyes of the Man of Imagination, Nature is Imagination itself.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gerrit Komrij, 1991, in Rob Aben and Saskia de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden: History and Development of the Hortus Conclusus and its Reintroduction into the Present-day Urban Landscape* (Rotterdam: 010, 1999), 21.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Moore, *The Re-Enchantment of Everyday Life* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1996), 96. 102.

<sup>3</sup> Ode to a Garden Carpet, Unknown Sufi Poet, circa 1500. quoted in Nadar Ardalan and Laleh Bakhtiar, *The Sense of Unity: The Sufi Tradition in Persian Architecture* (London: ABC International Group, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1973), 135.

<sup>4</sup> William Blake, *Complete Writings*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 793.



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The *Hortus Conclusus*, or Enclosed Garden, a space thoroughly imbued with the idea of peace, innocence, beauty, happiness and safety has been fecund in the imagination of men from the earliest of times.

Already in 540 B.C. the Greeks were amazed by the walled gardens and parks of the Persians. These gardens, referred to as *paridaeza* in Old Persian, were described by Xenophon, the Greek essayist and historian in his Socratic Discourse, the *Oeconomicus*. In it he observes that the Persian king is not only an excellent warrior, but also excels in the art of cultivation. "In whatever countries the king resides, or wherever he travels, he is concerned that there be gardens, the so-called pleasure gardens, filled with all the fine and good things that the earth wishes to bring forth,

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<sup>5</sup> Eric Gill, "Hortus Conclusus," Wood Engraving from Canticum Canticorum Portfolio, 1930. Courtesy of the artist's estate, The Bridgeman Art Library, [www.collection.britishcouncil.org/html](http://www.collection.britishcouncil.org/html), accessed 3 March 2008.

and in these he spends most of his time, when the year doesn't preclude it".<sup>6</sup> This type of pleasure garden was called by Cyrus a *pairidaeza*; *pairi* meaning around and *daeza* meaning wall. This translated into the Latin *paradisus* and in 1175 it appeared in a Middle English Biblical passage, as *paradis*.<sup>7</sup>

Appropriating Henri Lefebvre's conception of produced space as a heuristic tool, it is possible to argue that the idea of a perfect paradise fused with the concept of the enclosed garden of Cyrus, producing a deeply evocative life-affirming space. Produced space, according to Lefebvre, implies a process of signification which can be decoded and read. It is, therefore, a social product, but it also serves as a tool of thought and action. Not only a means of production, it moreover, becomes an effective means of power, control and domination, for produced space is a dialectical process limited to those subjects who have knowledge of its codes and language, thus excluding all others. He argues that it is in the process of perceiving and conceptualizing space that social, mental and physical spaces conflate and seize to be indistinguishable.<sup>8</sup>

The gardens of Cyrus, in terms of their enclosure and strict regularity of design, enforced the idea of control and domination. It was a strong social message of power, power over the people as well as power over nature. More than only social power, these gardens, physically, isolated within their walls all that was considered good within the world, keeping out that which was not considered acceptable, thus

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<sup>6</sup> Xenophon, "*The Oeconomicus*," trans. Carnes Lord, from Leo Strauss, *Xenophon's Socratic Discourse, An Interpretation of the Oeconomicus* (Ithaca, 1970), 19-22, quoted by Elizabeth B. Moynihan, *Paradise as a Garden: In Persia and Mughal India* (New York: George Braziller, 1979), 1.

<sup>7</sup> See John Dixon Hunt, *Greater Perfections: The Practice of Garden Theory* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000), 16, and Moynihan, *Paradise as a Garden*, 1, for a detailed description of the Spartan commander Lysander's visit with the Persian, Cyrus the Younger and his impression of the garden.

<sup>8</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 17.

evil. Physical design became a symbol of another ordered world where man was free from those forces causing him pain and suffering.

Aben and de Wit's arguments offer another perspective. They argue that a depiction of a social system and the landscape came together with universal symbolism focused on the role of water. As Middle Eastern settlements were dependent on ingenious irrigation systems, these water channels were regulated by a strong legal system. In their words:

The irrigation system represented society and the world, and the garden, irrigated with raised channels, is at once the pinnacle and symbol of this system. The king, as head of the irrigation system was directly responsible for the welfare of the entire country. The fountain symbolizes the hand of the monarch who defeats his enemy and defends his people.<sup>9</sup>

Both these arguments, however, agree that the garden by means of a social construction of a specific spatial ordering offered a fertile arena for interaction between subjects, space and surroundings.

Mentally, this merging of power and space could lead to what, Gerardus van der Leeuw defines as a sacred space.<sup>10</sup> Sacred space becomes for him a specific locality "by the effects of power repeating themselves there, or being repeated by man". The gardens of Cyrus provided a haven of peace, order and pleasure distinct from the hostile and chaotic world. These gardens, through memory and allusion,

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<sup>9</sup> Rob Aben and Saskia de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden: History and Development of the Hortus Conclusus and its Reintroduction into the Present-day Urban Landscape* (Rotterdam, 010, 1999), 34. They will be the main source on the Enclosed Garden unless otherwise specified.

<sup>10</sup> See also David Chidester's rereading of Gerardus van der Leeuw's exploration of the sacred as a concept of power to argue a politics of sacred space in "The Poetics and Politics of Sacred Space: Towards a Critical Phenomenology of Religion," in *From the Sacred to the Divine: A New Phenomenological Approach*, Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, ed. (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Press, 1994), 211-231. Chidester's argument of sacred space as contested space will also be discussed at a later point in this thesis.



offered a gateway to something better, something larger than the human community or even the self.

It becomes a sacred place because of the very “character of its selectivity”, it offers refuge and in “infinite space a “sanctuary” arises”.<sup>11</sup> The garden as sanctuary is taken up by the imagination and, as such, it is a representational space. This representational space overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects and in most circumstances it tends towards a more or less “coherent system of non-verbal symbols and signs”.<sup>12</sup> The enclosed garden as representational space offered permanent visions of a transitory world, providing a milieu susceptible to discourse and interpretation.<sup>13</sup>

This sacred space does not stand in a binary opposite to that of profane space since it forms part of the triad of perceived, conceived and lived space. However, as a representational space it becomes infused with imaginative awareness. It becomes what Henri Lefebvre calls absolute space, a strictly symbolic space and “for those in its vicinity, „this is the *true space*, the space of truth, and of truth”s sudden eruptions”.<sup>14</sup>

The pleasure gardens of Cyrus offered safety and protection; it was an ideal and sacred space. This ideal Persian paradise garden became conflated with the myths

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<sup>11</sup> Sanctuary from Latin “sanctus” meaning holy. Mac K. Grisworld, “A History of the Sanctuary Garden,” *Design Quarterly*, 169 (Summer 1996): 1-10. See also his explanation of the sanctuary garden as a spatial metaphor for a psychological space, “the repository of private meaning, self-examination and memory. See also Gerardus van der Leeuw, *In Essence and Manifestation: A Study in Phenomenology*. Vol. 2, trans. J.E. Turner (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 394-395 for a description of Nature as the ideal sacred place, which plays a role even in later architecture of worship.

<sup>12</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 39, defines representational space as a space directly lived through its associated images and symbols, it is the dominated but passively experienced space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate.

<sup>13</sup> John Dixon Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture* (London: The MIT Press, 1992), 95, 291.

<sup>14</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 236.

of other perfect, everlasting gardens and in this process, the enclosed garden becomes a symbol of a divine sanctuary, a special place filled with a sense of holiness and well being, a paradise on earth.<sup>15</sup>

The first western gardens were those in the Mediterranean basin. There in the desert areas stretching from North Africa to the valleys of the Euphrates, the so-called cradle of civilization, where plants were first grown for crops by settled communities, garden enclosures were also constructed... Gardens emphasized the contrast between two separate worlds: the outer one where nature remained awe-inspiring in control and an inner artificially created sanctuary, a refuge for man and plants from the burning desert, where shade trees and cool canals refreshed the spirit and ensured growth.<sup>16</sup>

In the mythic narrative the material and metaphorical space of the enclosed garden are linked, establishing an archetypal form of representation, the *locus amoenus*, which becomes a philosophical trope of everlasting peace and happiness. Even though, entrenched within this representation of space are ideology, knowledge and power, the enclosed garden as an archetypal space, carries a universal blueprint, a widely shared meaning found across cultural boundaries. Within its architectural space it effectively merges mythic meanings and landscape archetypes to strengthen and fuse the tension existing between reality and representation. Aben and De Wit explain:

The *hortus conclusus* unites within itself a marvelous assemblage of disparate aspects. It seeks to understand the landscape it denies, explain the world it excludes, bring in the nature it fears and summarize all this in an architectural composition.<sup>17</sup>

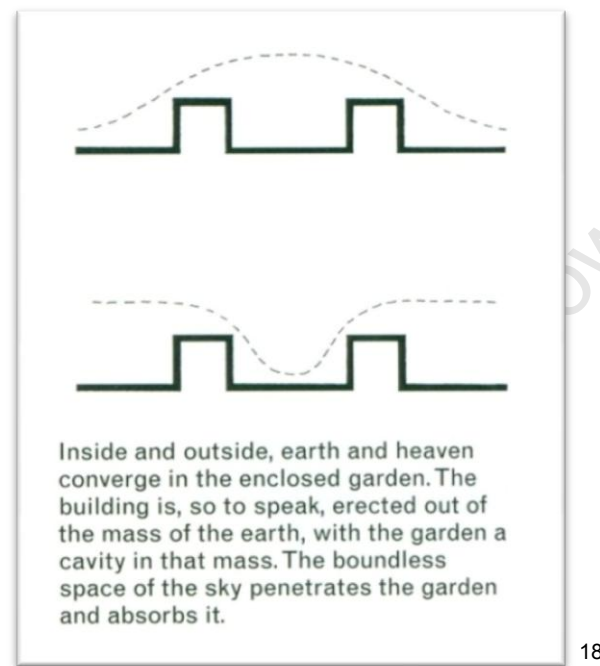
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<sup>15</sup> Hunt, *Greater Perfections*, 17-20, offers a detailed etymological analysis on the basic meaning and definition of the garden as it recurs in different cultures and times.

<sup>16</sup> Penelope Hobhouse, *Plants in Garden History* (London: Pavilion Books, 2004), 11.

<sup>17</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 22. See also pg. 24-30 for a discussion on the forest and oasis as landscape archetypes offering counterpoints in the wilderness and architectural archetypes. They also trace the garden, as metaphor for the soul, back to those natural archetypes of oasis and clearing.

In these myths, the two worlds, that of the “unworldly ideal and that of the real landscape”, come together in the *hortus conclusus*, the enclosed garden. “The garden shows the landscape its containing walls, and in the garden the natural horizon is shut out and replaced by an internal horizon: the upper edge of its surround. Inside it, a *paradise* is depicted”.



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The enclosed garden is an introverted space; it eliminates the outside world to create an image of an ideal world, away from the reality of the real world. Within its boundaries it becomes a meeting point between heaven and earth.<sup>19</sup>

On the one hand, these gardens represent paradise, but on the other, the landscapes of these gardens are projected onto the idea of paradise. As the physical environment of the enclosed garden becomes a sacred space offering sanctuary, paradise becomes a garden of eternal springs also offering sanctuary to life's unhappy existence. The enclosed garden, therefore, at the same time becomes a

<sup>18</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 10-11.

<sup>19</sup> Aben and De Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 12.

representation and an idea represented. Michel Foucault describes this as duplicated representation. Discussing a sign's position to its signifier, Foucault argues that the sign encloses two ideas, the one of the thing representing and the other of the thing represented.

But there is one condition that must be fulfilled if the sign is indeed to be this pure duality. In its simple state as an idea, or an image, or a perception, associated with or substituted for another, the signifying element is not a sign. It can become a sign only on condition that it manifests, in addition, the relation that links it to what it signifies. It must represent; but that representation, in turn, must also be represented within it.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, the visual structure of the enclosed garden transmits the visual representation of paradise by means of a multiplicity of forms such as water, greenery and geometry.<sup>21</sup> These representations, however, have a dual nature since the forms representing paradise also becomes the forms of an ideal world, a symbol<sup>22</sup> of paradise. These forms become part of the mythic vocabulary, they grow to be part of "a space in which there is no longer any intermediary figure to connect them: what connects them is a bond established, inside knowledge, between the *idea of one thing* and the *idea of another*".<sup>23</sup>

In this mythic lexicon paradise becomes an eschatological landscape filled with peace and abundance offering a solution to the transience of time and a way to cope with death and immortality. This image becomes part of the holy texts of religion; it inspires poetry, painting, garden carpets and miniatures. But as Aben and De Wit

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<sup>20</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 64, See also pg. 58-67 for his analysis of the representation of the sign which makes visible at the same time references to itself, the materials of its creation and to the idea.

<sup>21</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 16.

<sup>22</sup> Symbolic representation, according to Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. James Creed Meredith, ed. Nicholas Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 178, § 59, does not present a concept directly but only in an indirect manner, needing reflection to discover its true meaning.

<sup>23</sup> Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 63.

point out, it is the *hortus conclusus* with its accent on order, which becomes the single representative hybrid of this ideal image of nature.<sup>24</sup> The enclosed garden mirrored a specific concept of the cosmos and provided a vision of the afterlife.<sup>25</sup>

The enclosed garden becomes an intermediary between man and landscape, since within its boundaries; it is simultaneously contained, as in a building, but also takes in the openness of the sky.<sup>26</sup> In architectural terms the garden is related to the landscape outside it, but within its walls it functions as a condensed entity in which historical, practical and spatial intricacies of landscape are made apparent. Quintessentially it is a contradiction; it is at the same time inside and outside, landscape and architecture, finite and infinite, constant, yet ever changing, and this polarity between endlessness and enclosure transpires to be the enclosed garden's most unique quality. Aben and De Wit talk of an "erotic" sense of space where there is at the same time physical sensation, feelings of finitude, safety, individuality and an awareness of both place (topos) and time (the moment). Existing within the very paradox of the infinite and the finite is the heightened perception of completeness, as these two extremes are intensified by being present simultaneously.<sup>27</sup>

This intermediary position is also reflected on by Edward S. Casey. He argues that because of its special spatial framework, the garden is an in-between place, a marginal place between sacred and profane. Behind the walls of the enclosed garden is a miniature cosmos in which a central body of water flowed into four

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<sup>24</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 32.

<sup>25</sup> Grisworld, "A History of the Sanctuary Garden," 2-3.

<sup>26</sup> Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 15-16, states that the boundary of a place does not merely implies and cutting off, but construed cosmologically it has a very positive presence. Quoting Aristotle he argues that nothing other than the limit of an existing thing is intrinsic to its being, thus the boundary of a thing determines its very place, its own place.

<sup>27</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 10, 14.

quarters of the world. Although, even when strictly self-contained and accorded quasi-sacred status, these gardens remain liminal phenomena as they are at the threshold of a series of things: wild space and contained space, building and nature, safety and chaos.<sup>28</sup>

The enclosed garden, however, as a site of power, also challenges interpretation. In its very essence it is a paradox, since the very limitations established by its boundaries, at the same time offers freedom as well.<sup>29</sup> It not only exists as an actual landscape, but it also gestures to things that only exist in the imagination and, therefore, it opens up infinity within its very finitude.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, physically and symbolically it offers sanctuary only to a selective group.

Being a site with contested meanings, the enclosed garden, becomes what Michel Foucault calls a *heterotopia*. They differ from *utopias*, which he defines as those sites that “afford consolation: although they have no real locality there is nevertheless a fantastic, untroubled region in which they are able to unfold: they open up cities with vast avenues, superbly planted gardens...”<sup>31</sup> Utopias present society in its perfected form. Heterotopias, on the other hand, are found in real places, a counter-site, “a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all

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<sup>28</sup> Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 155.

<sup>29</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 14. Hunt, *Greater Perfections*, 25-28, notes that the actual or implied enclosure may keep things in or things out. It also conveys to the insider that various hazards are kept outside while the same time also representing unattainable desires to the outsider. This topic which will again be touched upon, when referring to Chidester’s definition of sacred space as contested space. See also Megan Cassidy-Welch’s chapter “Boundaries and Memories The Space of Transition,” in *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings Thirteenth-Century English Cistercian Monasteries* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 24-45. She argues that boundaries created spatial divisions and in this way the cloister was both metaphorical and material, physically located and mentally imagined

<sup>30</sup> Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Continuum, 1975), 67. In his exposition of the symbol declares that the within the symbol the idea itself gives itself existence and as such it fills the symbol with meaning pointing to the fact that finite and infinite really belongs together.

<sup>31</sup> Foucault, *The Order of Things*, xviii. See also Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque*, he explains utopia as etymologically derived from a combination of Greek for a “good place” and for “no place”. The garden and utopias are paradoxical, as their timelessness as well as their naturalness is found within time.

the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted".<sup>32</sup> One of the functions of these heterotopias is to create an ideal space, different from the unordered chaotic experience of real space, a space that is perfect, ordered and safe.<sup>33</sup> It is, therefore, also as a heterotopia, which is capable of many superimposed meanings, that the enclosed garden should be viewed. In Foucault's words:

The traditional garden of the Persians as sacred space that was supposed to bring together inside its rectangle four parts representing the four parts of the world, with a space still more sacred than the others that were like an umbilicus, the navel of the world at its center (the basin and water fountain were there); and all the vegetation of the garden was supposed to come together in this space, in this sort of microcosm...The garden is the smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world. The garden has been a sort of happy, universalizing heterotopia since the beginning of antiquity.<sup>34</sup>

The *hortus conclusus*, or enclosed garden, becomes a microcosm in which the greater macrocosm is reflected.<sup>35</sup> It is world complete; bringing forth an accumulation of subtexts infused with archetypal images, sacred meanings and within its boundaries it becomes a locus for experience.

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<sup>32</sup> Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics*, 16, 1 (Spring 1986): 22-27, 24. In this excellent essay he also discusses five principles of meaning attributed to heterotopias.

<sup>33</sup> Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 27. It should be noted, however, that in appropriating Foucault's classification of heterotopias, it is always anchored within the idea of representational space.

<sup>34</sup> Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 25-26.

<sup>35</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 16. See also Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 154-155, for his descriptions of the gardens as a distinctly limited sphere of space, an intermediary between the completely constructed and the wild. Even if there is believed to be a miniature cosmos behind the walls, it still remains a liminal phenomena, a threshold between a series of things; outside/inside, sky/ground, horizon/path, standing still/walking.

## An Archetypal Paradise

In the Symbol proper, what we call a Symbol, there is ever, more or less distinctly and directly, some embodiment and revelation of the Infinite; the Infinite is made to blend itself with the Finite, to stand visible as it were, attainable there.<sup>36</sup>

According to the psychologist C.G. Jung certain symbols can be classified as “a *priori* type”, an archetype which is inherent in the collective unconscious and thus beyond individual birth and death. The archetype is, so to speak, an “eternal” presence, the only question is whether it is perceived by the unconscious mind or not. Jung, however, claims that these archetypes can only become conscious content when they are representable, thus, when they have the quality of an image or symbol.<sup>37</sup>

In their discussion on Jungian archetypes, Malnar and Vodvarka claim that universal images are those archetypes that are essentially unconscious content, which by being perceived takes its form from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear.<sup>38</sup> As the archetype enters consciousness the raw material of imagery and meaning are added to it, which then leads to the birth of the symbol. These archetypes assume multifaceted symbolic forms and as such can be understood as the generator of a type, which in turn engenders a situational model. As type, or as

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<sup>36</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus: The Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdröckh* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1846), 172.

<sup>37</sup> Carl Gustav Jung, *Dreams*, trans. R.F.C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 295.

<sup>38</sup> Joy Monice Malnar and Frank Vodvarka, *Sensory Design* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 13-14. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Knowledge and The Sacred* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 260-265, argues that: “Form is that by which an object is what it is. Form is not accidental to the object but determines its very reality. It is in fact the essence of the object ...essence belonging to the archetypal world”. It therefore, has an ontological reality and participates in the total economy of the cosmos. “Form is the reality of an object on the material level of existence. But it is also, as the reflection of an archetypal reality, the gate which opens inwardly and “upwardly” unto the formless Essence”.



symbolic form, they fuse with personal and cultural values, developing into powerful and evocative images with tangible characteristics.<sup>39</sup>

Malcolm Quantrill notes that the architectural form (the garden) is “capable of connecting us to a deep well of human consciousness, keeping open the channels of historical continuity by the myths, ideas, rituals and events which it represents”.<sup>40</sup> Thus, the enclosed garden, as type, derives much of its authenticity when it spiritually, symbolically and sensually embodies those aspects which it represents.<sup>41</sup>

The garden, as archetype, asks for answers to the question: What do gardens mean?<sup>42</sup> Clare Cooper Marcus puts forward the argument that this question can only be answered when a person goes further than the visual (type) and look for answers beneath and beyond the material or designed garden, that is, to speculate on the garden’s meaning in terms of symbol or metaphor.<sup>43</sup>

Linking the garden to mythology she argues that almost all cosmogonies envisage an initial chaos out of which the cosmos emerges, with cosmos originally meaning order.<sup>44</sup> This order is represented in many cosmologies by a myth of an undefiled place of unsurpassed peace and beauty, such as a garden or oasis. If this haven

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<sup>39</sup> Malnar and Vodvarka, *Sensory Design*, 6 describe type as the collective memory given structural form. Type is primarily not concerned with images that can be imitated but with an abstract idea that can serve as a rule. This vagueness that remains in type can be concretized in a model. Thus type is the general, abstract ordering of spatial elements reflecting broad cultural peculiarities while a model is a concretized image reflecting a particular spatial ordering to a specific situation. A model can be seen as a type made both perceptible and acceptable within a given social context.

<sup>40</sup> Malcolm Quantrill, *The Environmental Memory: Man and Architecture in the Landscape of Ideas* (New York: Schocken Books, 1987), 48.

<sup>41</sup> Malnar and Vodvarka, *Sensory Design*, 14.

<sup>42</sup> See also David E. Cooper *A Philosophy of Gardens* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 108-128, for his argument stating the existence of several modes of garden meaning.

<sup>43</sup> Claire Cooper Marcus, “The Garden as Metaphor,” in Mark Francis and Randolph T. Hester, Jr., eds., *The Meaning of Gardens* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990), 26-33.

<sup>44</sup> See Edwin Oliver James, *Creation and Cosmology: A Historical and Comparative Inquiry* (Amsterdam: E.J. Brill-Leiden, 1969).

could be found or perhaps be reproduced, it would allow the seeker to live forever in perfect happiness.

This view, that until recently there was a universal belief in a primordial paradise, is also held by Jean Delumeau. This primordial paradise was distinguished by perfection, peace, happiness, freedom, abundance and an absence of unhappiness and tension. This was not only an ideal world where all people got along peacefully, but in this world it was also possible to communicate freely with the divine realm. It was these beliefs that gave rise in the collective consciousness to a profound nostalgia for the recovery of this paradise. Delumeau also points out that this longing had its place both in religions that envisaged time as cyclical and those who saw time as linear, leading from one paradise to another. It offered a way to eliminate death, an eschatological paradise for those who deserved it. In all these musings, gardens featured very prominently as the model for such a paradise.<sup>45</sup>

In *Garden History, Philosophy and Design 200 BC-2000 AD*, Tom Turner contends that how gardens are formed clearly relates to specific ideas and beliefs or world views on Nature. His arguments brings again to the fore the paradox found in gardens, that “gardens made by man using natural materials to represent ideas about nature, are as much influenced by the actions of man as by the forces of nature”.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Jean Delumeau, *History of Paradise: The Garden of Eden in Myth and Tradition*, trans. Matthew O'Connell (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 6.

<sup>46</sup> See Tom Turner, *Garden History: Philosophy and Design 2000 BC-2000 AD* (London: Spon Press, 2005), 14-15, for his proposed qualification four ways in which nature is perceived. See also Robin Matthews's interesting exposition of the paradoxical tension found in the garden between its immediacy and inaccessibility. He calls it an enigmatic essence which we inherit as “a mythic awareness of *another* time and place. But we feel the ultimate grounds of *this* time and place, of real gardens and gardeners”, “In the Trail of the Serpent: A Theological Inquiry” in Francis and Hester, Jr., eds., *The Meaning of Gardens*, 46.

In his argument the paradox arises from the many meanings encompassed by the word “nature”, which resulted in different garden design approaches through the ages. In the past garden design provided the opportunity to realize the bonds between God, man and nature:

If the natural forms have a godlike existence in a perfect world they should be incorporated into architectural and garden design (Graeco-Roman and Islamic sacred geometry). If the nature of the world is revealed to mankind through religion, then gardens, as places for contemplation, should symbolize the perfection of nature (medieval gardens).<sup>47</sup>

These different views were, according to him, also associated with schools of philosophy and attitudes towards aesthetics. Hence, to understand the enclosed garden as archetype of an ideal world, or symbol of an unchanging eschatological landscape, it is required to unravel the ideas behind an ideal and unchanging world and its influence on aesthetics. It is, therefore, necessary to follow Turner’s lead and trace the development of this idea of a perfect world, back to the worldview found in Ancient Greece.

Important in the view of nature found in Ancient Greece, was the idea of forms that shaped the world. Starting with Pythagoras, Turner explains the origin of an aesthetics, displayed in design, based upon the discovery of harmonic proportion. It is, however, Plato’s idea of a perfect world of forms that will become a leading force of influence in future aesthetics and design.<sup>48</sup>

Plato’s belief in a perfect world, only accessible by means of reason, became known as the Theory of Forms. However, to place the idea of an ideal world in the ordered environment of the enclosed garden, it is important to try and unpick the thoughts

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<sup>47</sup> Turner, *Garden History: Philosophy and Design*, 18.

<sup>48</sup> Turner, *Garden History: Philosophy and Design*, 15.

behind Plato's creation of a perfect world of forms, for the enclosed garden encapsulates all those ideas in its architectural forms, becoming an archetypal symbol of a perfect world.

Plato lived in a world of change where time was thought of in terms of past, present and future. Past truths were questioned, new questions were raised and Plato found himself trying to find answers to questions on morality, aristocracy, nature and education. Giles Fraser states that Plato needed a response to the moral threat of the radical transience of time. His response to this threat was the establishment of a complex metaphysics in which reality is taken to subsist in a realm of changelessness and order. The world of appearance is constituted by change and chaos, while real reality is made up by changelessness and order. This reality can only be perceived by the virtue of releasing human perceptions from the constraints placed upon it by appearance. This offered the possibility of salvation from the devastation inflicted by wars and plagues on the social fabric of life. His creation of this ideal realm was an attempt to offer a "locus for moral and spiritual value which is not undone by the way of the world but can reliably sustain independent of those forces that threaten to crush it".<sup>49</sup>

Fraser further states, that crucial to this strategy of Plato, were a series of distinctions - body/soul, appearance/reality, material/immaterial, changing/eternal - which were intended to define a space which could be considered worthwhile and where a human could be insulated from the havoc of destiny.<sup>50</sup> Plato redefined reality, where the appearance of things, distinguished by change is a deception and

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<sup>49</sup> Giles Fraser, *Redeeming Nietzsche: On the Piety of Unbelief*. (London: Routledge, 2002), 46-47.

<sup>50</sup> Fraser, *Redeeming Nietzsche*, 47.

“real reality is apprehended only in as much as one is able to see beyond it”. Thus Plato’s Theory of Forms is an attempt to describe the nature of that unchanging reality. This idea of a perfect world of forms combined with beliefs of a primordial paradise and together it gave birth to a rhetorical trope; paradise as a fourfold, enclosed garden, with a pronounced center, as metaphor for a perfect world outside time.

In Ancient Greece sense was made of the world by developing a world view that could provide answers for mediating the physical world. The Neo Platonists developed this idea, art was to imitate nature, but not the everyday visible world; it gave an impression of the ideal and eternal world of Forms. Nature was understood as those essential and universal forms which shape the visible world, the ideal world lay beyond it and this epistemology became part of the spatial ordering of the enclosed garden.

The forms of the enclosed garden, as archetypes of paradise, pointed to another reality, unchanging and eternal, a perfect reality that offered salvation from the unhappiness caused by change and death. A reality which, according to Schopenhauer, could only be fully apprehended in aesthetical or mystical experience alone, as only such experiences allow for the perception of the very essence of a given object.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> F.W.J. Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art*, trans. Douglas W. Scott (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 161-162, writes that the plastic arts (under which we can place garden design) portray their ideas through real and corporeal objects. “The plastic arts portray within the real form simultaneously the essence and the ideal of things, and accordingly the highest indifference of essence and form”. He further describes the plastic art as the expression of reason and intuition and which are essentially symbolic. They portray neither the form alone nor the essence or ideal alone, but both “in indifference, such that neither the real signifies the ideal nor the ideal the real, since both are absolutely one”. See also Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 135 for his discussion of presentation essentially tied to the original represented and as such having an autonomous reality. “By being presented it experiences, as it were, an *increase in being*. The content of the picture itself is ontologically defined as an emanation of the original.” See as well Cooper, *A Philosophy of Gardens*,

Applying these theories to the enclosed garden enables the interpretation of the garden as an image of an ideal world, where the physical forms point to another perfect world, a paradise. It can, therefore, be argued that the enclosed garden's utopian dimension is drawn from a mythic vocabulary, emphasizing an ideal, perfect and everlasting world, which became translated, then, into the forms and structure of the garden as representations of such a world.

Furthermore, this idea of a perfect world became part of a rhetorical topos, built on the theme of *pleasance* (in Latin, *locus amoenus*), which emphasized the presence of a special place as sharing in the divine. As rhetorical device the *locus amoenus* served as a means to denote certain physical spaces as special providing opportunities for both allegorical and metaphorical deliberations. In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard talks of felicitous space, pleasant, delightful and well-suited space which becomes space that may be grasped and may be defended against adverse sources. In his words:

For diverse reasons and with the differences entailed by poetic shadings, this is eulogized space. Attached to its protective value, which can be a positive one, are also imagined values, which soon become dominant. Space that has been seized upon by the imagination cannot remain indifferent space subject to measures and estimates of the surveyor. It has to be lived in, not in its positivity, but with all the partiality of the imagination. Particularly, it nearly always exercises an attraction. For it concentrates being within limits that protect.<sup>52</sup>

On the one hand the garden becomes a symbolic representation of a primordial landscape. It offers a mythological space, filled with symbols, to act as conceptual

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129-154, for a discussion of symbol and epiphany in the garden. The garden is, according to him, an epiphany of the "relation between the source of the world and ourselves".

<sup>52</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, foreword John, R. Stilgoe, 1994 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), xxxv-xxxvi.

bridges between physical reality and that which is intangible.<sup>53</sup> Yi-fu Tuan explains these symbols as direct communication, which does not require linguistic mediation. An object, such as the enclosed garden, becomes a “symbol when its own nature is so clear and so profoundly exposed that while being fully itself it gives knowledge of something greater beyond”.<sup>54</sup>

On the other hand, as Foucault so clearly pointed out, the thing (paradise) represented finds its content in the thing (garden) representing. Although the idea of paradise becomes represented by the garden, it is the physical objects used in the garden that gives voice to those representations. Gardens such as those established in the deserts of the Middle East were considered a source of safety, with nourishment offered by its cooling waters and shading trees. This landscape, through metaphor, became a Perfect World, a Paradise, and an Ideal World which offered salvation. Paradise became an oasis filled with water and shade and where the saved had access to the divine.

Even though, as John Dixon Hunt clearly points out, each phase of garden art or design is culturally specific and influenced by a particular society’s attitude towards space and nature, archetypal inscriptions of meaning developed which could be read and decoded. Central motifs arose that had universal and widely shared meanings not limited to specific cultures.<sup>55</sup> In accordance, Yi-Fu Tuan states, that “the human passion for order demands clear visual expression, and there is nothing clearer, and

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<sup>53</sup> See also Delumeau, *History of Paradise*, 6-10, on myths of the golden age found in Greco-Roman traditions.

<sup>54</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 114.

<sup>55</sup> See Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque*, 3-4, 9-14, 287-291, for an exposition of the three natures found in culture. The idea of second nature was first used by Cicero to mean the cultural landscape, elements introduced into the physical world to serve a purpose. Cicero did not mention first nature, but under first nature can be understood the unmediated world (primal nature or wilderness). Gardens can then be considered as third natures for they go beyond the cultural landscape introducing pleasure.

at the same time more laden with symbolic meaning, than the circle, the square and the polygon".<sup>56</sup> These archetypes became symbols of timelessness and immortality, being part of a process that Jung describes, as a "nuclear process" in the objective psyche, which sets itself up to answer certain conditions of psychic need with those images which promise to heal.<sup>57</sup>

Yi-Fu Tuan also argues that these symbolic forms, enforced by myth, are linked to the transcendent and in realization these cosmic pretensions are readily grasped both visually and conceptually.<sup>58</sup> They become part of the identifying forms accommodating that which Lefebvre defines as absolute space. These forms such as the square, mandala and circle are, according to Lefebvre, microcosms of the universe and become only meaningful when considered as significations of absolute space revealed within the spatial order it dominates.<sup>59</sup>

In the garden these symbolic forms are also given existence through the creation of a cosmogram where the garden is divided into four spheres with a central focus point, a fountain or a tree as symbol of life.<sup>60</sup> In the enclosed garden the attributes of these forms are, according to Ardalan and Bakhtiar fully developed; the mandala provides a centrifugal movement outward into the paradise of nature and a

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<sup>56</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Passing Strange and Wonderful: Aesthetics, Nature and Culture* (Washington, D.C.: A Shearwater Book, 1993), 111.

<sup>57</sup> Jung, *Dreams*, 295.

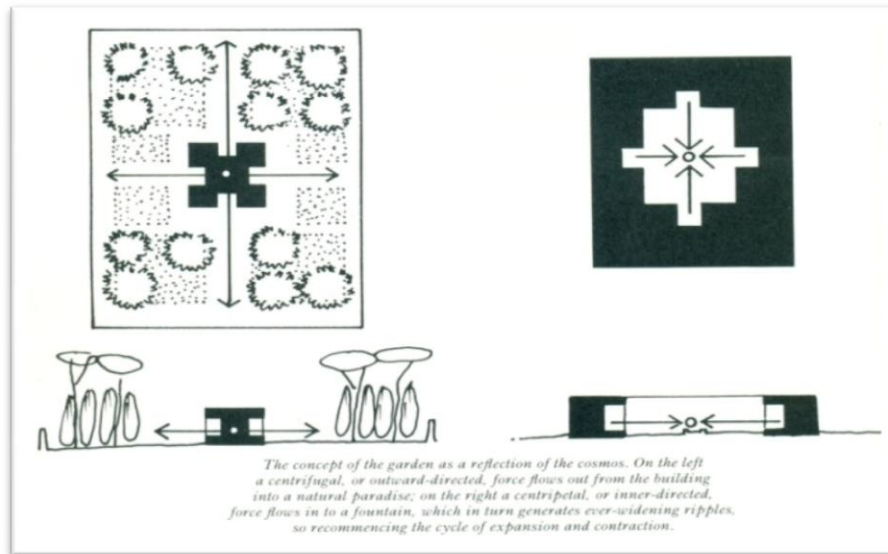
<sup>58</sup> Tuan, *Passing Strange and Wonderful*, 112.

<sup>59</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 237.

<sup>60</sup> See Jung, *Dreams*, 192, 249 on the symbolism of the fountain as a source of living water and pp. 291-297 on the development of the symbol of the center and the mandala. In his discussion of the various characteristics of the center he also refers to the phenomenon of the quaternity. The idea of four points, symbolizing the four points of the compass, the four winds, the four seasons or four rivers dividing the earth into the four continents play an important role in the design of the enclosed garden, as will be discussed in more detail later in the thesis.



centripetal motion inward to the basin of water or fountain which is its spiritual centre.<sup>61</sup>



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The enclosed garden became “particularly geared to invoke both what is actual, palpable in the material world and what lies only in the wide spaces of human imagination”.<sup>63</sup> A garden’s form has significance and content, it declares current ideas of human nature and existence through its physical design.

A “quasi structural link” between happiness and the garden arose, joining inside a favored area the generosity of nature to water, pleasant fragrances and sounds to an absence of suffering, disorder and the transience of time.<sup>64</sup> This link between happiness and the garden, therefore, developed into a specific typology, which Aben and De Wit describe as the *Hortus Ludi* or pleasure garden, the *Hortus Catalogi*, a

<sup>61</sup> Ardalan and Bakhtiar, *The Sense of Unity*, 68.

<sup>62</sup> John Brookes, *Gardens of Paradise: The History and Design of the Great Islamic Gardens* (New York: New Amsterdam, 1987), 22.

<sup>63</sup> Hunt, *Greater Perfections*, 84.

<sup>64</sup> Delumeau, *History of Paradise*, 6.

garden of geometric arrangement and the *Hortus Contemplatus*, a garden of contemplation.<sup>65</sup>

Goethe wrote that “Everything that happens is a symbol, and in fully representing itself, it points to everything else” a statement which, when considering the enclosed garden, could be interpreted that everything in the garden can take on the character of a symbol, if one is inclined to see it in such a way.<sup>66</sup> The sacred sanctuary of the Persian gardens developed into an eschatological sanctuary, an idealized and safe place where man can find salvation not only on earth, but a lasting salvation from death. Mythology conflated ideas on a social system, a landscape with water, greenery and order with universal symbols of timelessness and immortality, which lead to the enclosed garden developing as an archetypal image of paradise.



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For Jung the enclosed garden is a *temenos*, a source of life, the ultimate archetype of an ideal world, similar to Plato's ideal world. This is a world that offers safety and

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<sup>65</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 37-38.

<sup>66</sup> Goethe quoted in Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 66.

<sup>67</sup> Bebenhausen monastery, Germany. Photo courtesy of <http://www.sacred-destinations.com>, accessed 22 February 2009.

nourishment; it is an idyllic repose from the chaos and unhappiness of man's natural existence.<sup>68</sup>

Within the specific spatial structure of the enclosed garden, paradisaical symbols of transcendence can be interpreted and decoded, enabling a religious epistemology of the enclosed garden as an eschatological landscape.<sup>69</sup>



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<sup>68</sup> See also Mario Jacoby, *Longing for Paradise: Psychological Perspectives on an Archetype* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1985), 208. He explains that the self is expressed in an image of Paradise as a symbol of the true center with the inner psychic abilities of integrating various possibilities such as happiness, truth and immortality. See also Aben and De Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 26n. 5 for a discussion of the garden as metaphor for the soul.

<sup>69</sup> See also Christopher McIntosh, *Gardens of the Gods: Myth, Magic and Meaning* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 2-7 on his discussion of a language of gardens having a common structure and sharing three basic ingredients. He also gives an exposition on paradise as the oldest metaphor of gardens.

<sup>70</sup> The Garden of Paradise by an unknown Rhemish master (c.1410) in John Ashton and Tom Whyte, *The Quest for Paradise: Visions of Heaven and Eternity in the World's Myths and Religions* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 109.

# Sacred Space

The physicist must have a knowledge of Place, too, as well as of the infinite – namely whether there is such a thing or not, and the manner of its existence and what it is – both because all suppose that things which exist are somewhere...<sup>71</sup>



72

Ebrahim Moosa discussing a poetics of imagination in Al Ghazali's thoughts, builds his argument on a phrase used by Al Ghazali himself. This phrase reads: "And whatever precedes it is like a threshold/ antechamber/ vestibule [*diblīz*] for the seeker of it [God]". He continues to explain *diblīz* as a Persian word which has been Arabized, meaning "that space between the door and the house". For Moosa, Gazali's use of this metaphor, symbolizing an in-between space or liminal courtyard, was crucial to understanding the very essence of an epistemology that rests on "multiple narratives of thought".<sup>73</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Aristotle, *Physics*, IV.1208a27-30

<sup>72</sup> The Cloisters of the Lateran, now restored, [www.gutenberg.org/files/22153/22153-h/22153-h.htm](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/22153/22153-h/22153-h.htm), accessed 22 February 2009.

<sup>73</sup> Ebrahim Moosa, *Ghazālī & The Poetics of Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 39, 47-49.

Moosa explains the *diblīz*-ian space as a liminal space which signifies the space and action of two entries, an entry from the outside and an entry into the inside. In his words

It is the critical intermediate space between outside and inside, between exoteric (*zāhir*) and esoteric (*bātin*). And it is also the space one has to traverse in order to enter or exit, which is the real function of the threshold area. The *diblīz*-ian space constitutes a bounded space, a threshold between door (*bāb*) and house (*dār*)”.

This space, according to him, is not a worthless space, but one offering a multitude of uses. Viewed from the house proper it is on the outside, but viewed from the street it becomes part of the inside of the house. It is an in-between space which does not carry within it the firm demarcation qualities of a proper border. In strict architectural terms the *diblīz* can also be a courtyard, passage, porch or an enclosed garden.

However, the crucial dimension is the fact that without the *diblīz* one cannot speak about an embodied “door” and a “house”, nor can one speak of an “outside” and an “inside”. Even though it is located in between spaces, the *diblīz* frames all other spaces....the *diblīz* becomes a new locus of epistemic and political enunciation”.

For Moosa the *diblīz* metaphor captures an imaginative space which opens itself up for interaction and experience. Moosa argues that this space becomes a “mobile force field”, which lends itself to “nontotalitarian modes of being and thought”. It offers a space where the imagination can be creative, a unique intimate space, which in terms of being a threshold offers a poiesis of new experiences and understanding.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> See also Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. William R. Inge (London: Harcourt, 1959), 25 for his discussion of the threshold as symbol and at the same time vehicles of passage from one space to the other. John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Berkeley, 1934), 283 argues that the imagination is a gateway through which meanings find their way into a present interaction with an object.

By appropriating Moosa's *diblīz* metaphor and transposing it onto the enclosed garden, it is possible to argue that the enclosed garden as a *diblīz*-ian space participates in a whole range of ideas on spatial ordering. Within the liminal space of the enclosed garden, new physical, social and symbolic spaces are produced. Contained within this *diblīz*-ian metaphorical space, there is often a blurring of the boundaries between mental (or abstract) and physical space and this interconnectedness opens up a threshold to a new religious epistemology of constructed thought and experience.<sup>75</sup> As Gaston Bachelard claims, the door "is an entire cosmos of the Half-open", it schematizes two strong possibilities, but on its threshold there is a merging of possibilities, showing both the visible and the hidden.<sup>76</sup>

However, interpreting the enclosed garden as a threshold, existing simultaneously as an actual physical space, but also carrying within it properties of the sacred, asks for a closer look at some ways other scholars have defined the sacred and sacred space.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr defines the sacred as that which is related to the immutable, "to that Reality which is both the Unmoved Mover and the Eternal."<sup>77</sup> That Reality

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<sup>75</sup> Kim Knott, *The Location of Religion: A Spatial Analysis* (London: Equinox, 2005), 94-104 argues that space is both material and metaphorical, physical and imagined, where devotional spaces are linked together through mythic narrative, but that the body conditions the possibility of experience. Tuan, *Space and Place*, 17 similarly defines space as mythical, pragmatic and abstract or theoretical, emphasizing the fact that there are large areas of overlapping and interconnectedness. Both these scholars, however, agree that spatial practice signifies those ways people generate, use and perceive space.

<sup>76</sup> Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 222. See Brookes, *Gardens of Paradise*, 23-24. He explains that porch-like structure of the enclosed garden is called the *talar*, it provides the link between inside and outside. Metaphysically, however, the *talar* is understood as the locus of the soul moving between garden and building, the garden representing the spirit and the building the body. It is a transitional space between the spiritual and terrestrial worlds. In the garden the soul of man can move between two worlds, the physical and the spiritual.

<sup>77</sup> Nasr, *Knowledge and The Sacred*, 75-76.

which is immutable and eternal is the Sacred as such, and the manifestation of this Reality in the stream of becoming and the matrix of time is that which possesses the quality of sacredness". According to him, that which is sacred carries an imprint of the Eternal in its physical outward reality.

Man's sense of the sacred is none other than his sense for the Immutable and the Eternal, his nostalgia for what he really *is*, for he carries the sacred within the substance of his own being and most of all within his intelligence which was created to know the Immutable and contemplate the Eternal.

Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka introduces into her discussion of the sacred a vision of human imagination and creativity, which is found at the heart of human experience. Her notion of the sacred involves, according to Thomas Ryba, a striving for immortality and transcendence.<sup>78</sup> The sacred becomes both immanent and transcendent; it is the driving force of all human creativity as well as its ultimate end. Therefore, a fitting epithet for the sacred is the Eternal as it refers to the presence of the Sacred which infuses unique moments of human creativity. In Tymieniecka's words:

Nevertheless, from the very origin of mankind, man has sought tirelessly to transcend the finiteness he consciously feels in himself and to project himself in a thrust beyond his and his life-world's framework toward „transcendence". The especially acute consciousness of his finitude and his imperious desire to transcend it are found at the heart of man's preoccupations...Moreover, this effort, in which the aspirations of human genius are concentrated, culminates in the transmission of a *message*. This message raises us beyond the Beautiful, the True, the Just, - (the objects of our esthetic, intellectual and moral yearnings) – to the point of our desire: *the Sacred*.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Thomas Ryba, "The Idea of the Sacred," in *From the Sacred to the Divine*, Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, ed. (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1994), 21-42, 38-41.

<sup>79</sup> Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, *Logos and Life: The Three Movements of the Soul*, Book 2 (Dordrecht: Kluwer, ), xxxiii.

David Chidester claims that in the study of religion, there are two broad lines of defining the sacred, the one substantial and the other situational. Substantial definitions report to have penetrated and reported essential experiences of the sacred. Situational definitions, on the other hand, analyze practical, relational and frequently contested dynamics of the production of the sacred.<sup>80</sup>

Naming Otto's definition of the holy, Eliade's focus on the „real“ and Van der Leeuw's on power, as examples of substantial definitions. Chidester describes these definitions as attempts to “replace an insider's invocation of certain experiential qualities that can be associated with the sacred”. According to him, these perspectives of the sacred have identified the sacred as an “awesome, powerful manifestation of reality, full of ultimate significance”.

As examples of situational analysis of the sacred, Chidester names Emile Durkheim, whom he states, as locating the sacred at the “nexus of human practices and social projects”, where the sacred is devoid of meaning and an empty signifier. Levi-Strauss also focuses on the term as a signification of difference assigned to anything through human interpretation and ritualization. As situational term the sacred becomes a byproduct of sacralization, the result of an ongoing cultural process of sacralizing space, time, persons and social relations.<sup>81</sup>

Drawing his line of argument through to sacred space, Chidester, developing his own thesis of sacred space as contested space, touches on what he calls the poetics and politics of sacred space. Mircea Eliade's ontological approach, describing sacred

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<sup>80</sup> David Chidester, “The Poetics and Politics of Sacred Space: Towards a Critical Phenomenology of Religion,” in *From the Sacred to the Divine*, Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, ed. (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Press 1994), 211-232, 211

<sup>81</sup> See Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Towards Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 106-112 for a discussion of Durkheim and Levi-Strauss on sacralization through ritual.



space as radically set apart from the profane, coming into being through a hierophany and forming the center of new meaningful worlds in terms of metaphor and symbolism encompasses such a poetics of sacred space.<sup>82</sup>

The cultural approach to sacred space rejects the idea that sacred places innately possess a power or intentionality that comes from within or outside themselves. These theorists, such as J.Z. Smith and David Chidester, argue that every human ascription of sacrality is a social construction of reality.<sup>83</sup> J.Z. Smith's view focuses on ritual by which places are sacralized. Places become sacred by the cultural labor of rituals that are historically specific and which entail constant attention to memory, design, construction and control. David Chidester on the other hand, focuses on sacred place as a culturally defined site over which conflicting groups disagree.<sup>84</sup> Sacred space, according to him, defines the relationship between insiders and outsiders. A relationship continuously being contested at the centre and borders of sacred space and as a result sacred places achieve distinction because of always being at a risk of dispossession.<sup>85</sup>

Belden Lane identifies a third approach to sacred space, the phenomenological approach, where places themselves participate in the perception being made of

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<sup>82</sup> Chidester, "The Poetics and Politics of Sacred Space," 214. See also Sarah Hamilton and Andrew Spicer, *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 2-5 for a discussion of Eliade's paradigm viewed from other disciplines.

<sup>83</sup> Hamilton and Spicer, *Defining the Holy*, 1- 26 also query the Durkheimian juxtaposition of sacred and profane, posing the question to what extent is sacred space constructed and defined? Focusing on a specific historical age they investigate attitudes towards sacred space focusing on its construction through personal experience and communal practice emphasizing the definition of sacred space through context; Larry E. Shiner in his essay, "Sacred Space, Profane Space, Human Space," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 40, 4. (December 1972): 425-436 also argues against the radical polarity of sacred and profane and focuses on "lived space" as offering the possibility of both the "homogenous space of objectifying thought and luminosity of sacred places"

<sup>84</sup> Chidester, "The Poetics and Politics of Sacred Space," 218-219.

<sup>85</sup> See Belden C. Lane, *Landscapes of the Sacred: Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 43-52 on the advantages and disadvantages of both these approaches.

them.<sup>86</sup> This approach asks for a bodily engagement with place emphasizing that sacred place participates in a whole array of sensory exchanges. Arguing that all human perception of landscape is persistently interactive, he concludes that knowledge of the world demands an embodied presence which is actively present in the world. He believes that one's "actual embodied experience in encountering a place perceived as sacred is crucial, then, to the sense of magic or awe that one finally attributes to it".<sup>87</sup>

Considering the enclosed garden as a *diblīz*-ian space accords to it a spatial sensibility where an intermingling between physical and imagined or abstract space is possible. Although the physical dimensions of this space is fixed and demarcated geographically, the fact that it is a liminal space, neither inside nor outside, opens it up to more subtle and elusive geographies. It allows for the construction of new geo-mythical conceptions, which enables the production of imaginative topographies, where there is a confluence of the boundaries between the mythical and the real.<sup>88</sup> As a *diblīz*-ian space it unlocks the possibilities of a rare merging of physical and imagined space, erupting into the production of new spaces which frames all other spaces.

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<sup>86</sup> Lane, *Landscapes of the Sacred*, 41, 44.

<sup>87</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 53. See also David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 33. He writes that a man's life and the world's life are deeply intertwined. In his words: "The world and I reciprocate one another. The landscape as I directly experience it is hardly a determinate object: it is an ambiguous realm that responds to my emotions and calls forth feelings from me in turn"

<sup>88</sup> Samer Akkach, *Cosmology and Architecture in Premodern Islam: An Architectural Reading of Mystical Ideas* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 167. According to Tuan, *Space and Place*, 12-18, human spaces reflect a quality of human senses and mentality. He argues that the mind frequently extrapolates beyond the sensory evidence, constructing spaces that depend on the power of the mind. He names three principal types of constructed space, mythical, pragmatic and abstract or theoretical space, but he also emphasizes that there are also large areas of overlapping between the regulation of material space and the liberation associated with abstract spaces in these monasteries. See also Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings*, 1-8 for a discussion of several scholars' interpretations of the ways in which spaces are produced and her own discussion on the relationship between the regulation of material space and the liberation associated with abstract spaces in these monasteries.

To be in the world or to be situated at all, according to Edward S. Casey, is to be in a place.<sup>89</sup> Drawing from Heidegger, Casey states that place “is the phenomenal particularization of “being-in-the-world,” and that place serves as the condition of all existing things. More than only being locatory and situational, place belongs to the actual notion of existence. To be placed is to be bounded or limited by it. This limit, though, does not imply a cutting off process or a physical geometric concept of boundary, but construed cosmologically it can become a very positive presence. Similarly, Jeff Malpas states that the concept of place is “essentially a concept of a *bounded*, but open region *within which* a set of interconnected elements can be located”. It is an idea of place involving a form of containment within bounds. In his words:

Containment involves the establishing of a differentiated form of spatiality, and an associated directionality, that can be expressed in terms of „within“, „without“, internal and „external“ and that is compatible with space understood as an extended and homogenous field. Such directionality, and with it the important role played by notions of „inside“ and „outside“ in our own grasp of place and space, is directly tied to the necessary perspectival character of space”.<sup>90</sup>

Continuing his argument of places as bounded, but also always opening themselves up to disclose other places within them, Malpas emphasizes that places are also open to reinterpretations, meaning different things for different people or providing different spaces for different things. These places, in addition, offer from within themselves the opportunity to look outwards and find oneself part of a greater sphere. Similarly the enclosed garden, according to Aben and De Wit, is an

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<sup>89</sup> Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, xv, 15.

<sup>90</sup> Jeff E. Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 170-171.

interpretation and a reworking of nature. It offers palpable references to enable a person to orient himself in space, time and society.

*Cosmic orientation*, the primitive experience of being on this earth, is provided by the opposition between earth and heaven, high and low, vertical and horizontal, light and dark. The sun's path and that of the stars aid orientation and give a sense of direction. *Temporal orientation* is gained from the rhythm of the seasons, of day and night with their utterly different effect on our experience of space, and from the tangible presence of the past. *Territorial orientation* proceeds from the visible topography, the simultaneous presence form close to and far off, the references to the far distance from out of the enclosed space and the dualities of centre and periphery, inside and outside.<sup>91</sup>

In the physical enclosure of the enclosed garden, these aspects of orientation take on architectural shape, whereby structure is introduced into unspecified natural space.<sup>92</sup> The enclosed garden takes on specific properties enabling an interaction with the surroundings, which viewed on its own can be daunting and overwhelming. "The interior is particularized with regards to the outside, generating a magic threshold between two worlds that is rendered visible by the physical boundary".<sup>93</sup>

Discussing the homeless gardens of New York, Robert Pogue Harrison claims that gardens, in general, in their "self-gathered forms" give "human dimensions to an otherwise unbounded nature". Likewise, the enclosed garden, through its compositional arrangement creates an "open enclosure (or enclosure within the open) that gives the amorphous circumambient environment a measure of human, and not just spatial orientation".<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 35.

<sup>92</sup> Tuan, *Space and Place*, 17 argues that place can be treated as a type of object and that places and objects define space giving it a geometric personality.

<sup>93</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 36.

<sup>94</sup> Robert Pogue Harrison, *Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 43.

Within the *hortus conclusus*, the landscape is cultivated, isolating and even eliminating the outside wilderness, creating its own context, giving it its own personality and its own reality. Within the architectural conception of the enclosed garden, the garden reflects a sense of place, becoming a defined space encircling within itself a total reflection of the cosmos, while simultaneously reflecting for the "intellect, the essence, the hidden dimension, latent in positive space"<sup>95</sup> The enclosed garden looking outward opens up to the centrifugally orientated form of the macrocosm, but concurrently it also looks inward centripetally to the microcosm situated within.

As Malpas states:

Places offer themselves in a multiplicity of aspects that reflects, not only the various ways in which those places themselves be „located“ in respect of other places, but also in terms of the various orientations and perspectives that are possible even within the bounds of a particular place and that reflect the very open-ness of place as a structure that allows the appearance of things within it. Places can turn outwards to reveal other places and locations; they can turn inwards to reveal their own character of the subject who identifies herself with that place.<sup>96</sup>

In *The Question of Being*, Heidegger writes that ““place” places man in such a way that it reveals the external bonds of his existence and at the same time the depths of his freedom and reality”.<sup>97</sup> Place, according to him reveals a person’s being here, his

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<sup>95</sup> Ardalan and Bakhtiar, *The Sense of Unity*, 68. Tuan, *Space and Place*, 54 states that human lives are dialectical movements between shelter and venture, attachment and freedom. They welcome the constraint and freedom, the bounded ness of place and the exposure of space.

See also Harrison, *Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition* 48. He sees the garden as standing at the center of a human mode of being that stretches between a longing for closure and the open-endedness of human existence, standing between a craving for reality and a craving for deliverance from reality. Gardens, according to him, do not bring order to nature but give order to a person’s relation to nature, giving form and articulation to their historical worlds.

<sup>96</sup> Malpas, *Place and Experience*, 171-172.

<sup>97</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1958), 19.

human reality. Malpas claims that mortality is a necessary consequence of a located existence. A person's capacity to think, feel and her embeddedness in place, is bound together and part of the same structure that makes the person who she is.<sup>98</sup> It can be argued, however, that nowhere is the fleeting quality of existence more noticeable than in a garden, within its cycles of growth and decay it emphasizes a person's own finitude and mortality. However, the enclosed garden offers behind its walls an idea of a place immune to change, decay and disintegration. Linked to Tymieniecka's ideas on an inward sacredness it offers the means to escape from the narrow confines brought about by the realization that the experience of a person's own mortality is directly linked to her embeddedness in place.<sup>99</sup> Its power, similarly to the power Tymieniecka associates with the sacred, lies in its capacity to "grasp the change-filled, death-bond beauty of life at the crossroads where being and transience meets".<sup>100</sup>

The enclosed garden as a *diblīz* tolerates a free movement between physical and mental space, sacred and profane space. As produced space, it is, to use Lefebvre's term, a space of representation, fully embedded in the cultural imagination through tradition and symbol.<sup>101</sup> Within its boundary it holds elements of the politics of sacred

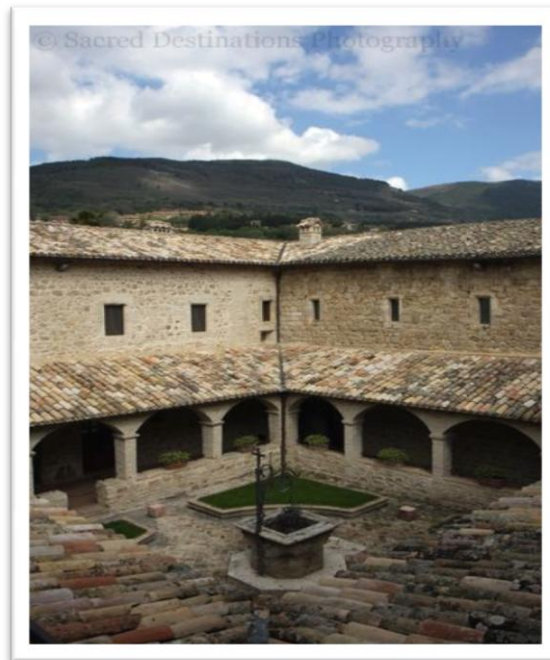
<sup>98</sup> Malpas, *Place and Experience*, 192.

<sup>99</sup> Gerardus van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*. Vol. 2, 402 puts forward an interpretation of sacred space as existing in the salvation found in the human heart, that the real sanctuary is man.

<sup>100</sup> Ryba, "The Idea of the Sacred," 86.

<sup>101</sup> Nasr, *Knowledge and The Sacred*, 76 claims that the Sacred is the source of Tradition and that which is traditional is inseparable from the sacred. Akkach, *Cosmology and Architecture in Premodern Islam*, 162-167 gives a very interesting discussion of the sacred and the profane. After discussing Otto's and Eliade's interpretations of these terms he suggest the use of a premodern genre of *fadā'il*, which is an adjectival term focusing on the merits or virtues of certain texts, individuals and places. *Fadā'il* discourse, according to him, "confers significance on places, monuments, and landscapes. It constructs the virtues of a particular site through a complex juxtaposition of various religious, cosmological, eschatological and environmental references, while at the same time weaving together elements of vernacular history, sacred geography, religious rituals and popular legends". See also Malpas, *Place and Experience*, 185-188 for his argument on the role of narrative in the ordering of space and time.

space, as the very exclusive nature of the medieval cloister garden will show. It also encompasses a poetics of sacred space, where spiritual meanings are attributed to its forms, whereby it becomes a text to be read filled with allegorical, moral and anagogical meanings.<sup>102</sup>



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It is, therefore, possible to argue that the *hortus conclusus* becomes sacred space, because, to use Ghazali's phrase, it is "like a threshold/antechamber vestibule [*diblīz*] for the seeker of it" [safety/salvation/transcendence]. The *hortus conclusus* as sacred space liberates the "self-gathering and protective powers of form", gathering around it physical, mental and spiritual energies that allow for an innovative art of doing and reflecting.<sup>104</sup> As Ardalan and Bakhtiar state:

The concept of "place" or *makān* is composed of both the container (*jism*) and the contained (*rūh* or spirit). It does not have a tangible existence, but exists in the

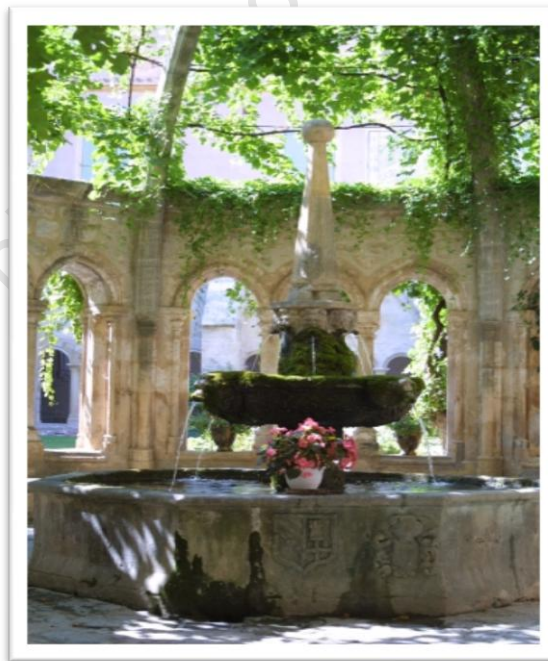
<sup>102</sup> Daniel Faure and Veronique Rouchon Mouilleron, *Cloisters of Europe: Gardens of Prayer* (New York: Viking Studio, 2001), 27-29.

<sup>103</sup> San Damiano, Italy. Photo courtesy of <http://www.sacred-destinations.com>, accessed 22 February 2009.

<sup>104</sup> Harrison, *Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition*, 43.

consciousness of the beholder who visually perceives physical boundaries while his intellect perceives the spirit as “contained,” defined within the boundaries.<sup>105</sup>

The enclosed garden, therefore, stands as a threshold between a world that could leave a person exposed and vulnerable, conscious of her fragile and limited existence and an enclosed humanized space on which meaning can be imposed and enacted. So as a metaphorical *diblīz-ian* space, the enclosed garden, gathers within itself different modes of representation and cultural construction. But most importantly, as sacred space it can become a map of more elusive and intangible geographies, providing visual structure to an eschatological landscape outside of time and as such offer itself up as a mnemonic tool for salvation. The enclosed garden becomes sacred as it carries within itself an “imprint of the eternal” and as such it functions as a vehicle for transcending death, offering a vision of immortality captured in the presence of the moment.



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<sup>105</sup> Ardalan and Bakhtiar, *The Sense of Unity*, 13.

<sup>106</sup> Valmagne Abbey, France. Photo courtesy of <http://www.sacred-destinations.com>, accessed 22 February 2009.



## A Locus for Experience

All knowledge takes its place within the horizons opened up by perception.<sup>107</sup>

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The landscape is determined by the horizon. This *horizontal alignment* is transmuted in the enclosed garden into a *vertical alignment*. The box in the landscape can contain a surprising inner world: „The inside is bigger than the outside“. The vertical alignment can find a counterpart in that box's relationship with the landscape, in the visual axis to the horizon, in the transparency of the space, in an emphasis on the periphery, in a horizontal sequence or division of spaces. The enclosed garden can be described in terms of open and closed on the one hand and the relationship between vertical and horizontal alignment (or expansiveness) on the other. The garden is closed with respect to the landscape, open with respect to spaces inside a building. Open and closed are played off against one another in the relationship between the scales of garden, building and landscape. The space is open to the sky, and it is this link between garden and sky that is decisive for the garden in its entirety – as though a tangible axis between its central point and the *zenith*.<sup>108</sup>

In his illuminating book, *Placeways A Theory of the Human Environment*, E.V. Walter explains that the sense of place carries with it a meaning which is twofold. Firstly it is felt by people and then they grasp its meaning. He argues for another kind of sacred place, one that leads the mind somewhere else, which creatively uses the ambiguities of space to move the mind. It is a whole synthesis of located experience which includes the imagination as well as the sights, stories, feelings and concepts that contribute to the sense of place.<sup>109</sup> Charles Moore talks of a “genius of place”

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<sup>107</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge Classics, 1958), 241.

<sup>108</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 17-18.

<sup>109</sup> E. V. Walter, *Placeways: A Theory of the Human Environment* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 2, 72.

where place participates in the full array of its qualities and attributed meanings.<sup>110</sup> It is a lived space which may be “experienced as „moments” of presence”, glimpses of totality in the banality of everyday life when alienation is transcended”.<sup>111</sup> Not only does it offer a space where the imagination can be active, but it emphasizes a sensory definition of the sacred as an entrance to an inspiring world, defined by sensory experience.<sup>112</sup>

In the foregoing section, the enclosed garden as sacred place was built upon the spatial trope of threshold. Using Moosa’s understanding of a *diblīz*-ian space as a liminal, but unique space, the enclosed garden exposed itself to multiple understandings of sacred space. Considering the enclosed garden, however, as a sacred locus for experience, asks for a broadening of one’s vision, a stepping over the threshold and a focusing on the horizon beyond.<sup>113</sup>

David Abram writes that the visible horizon is a “kind of gateway or threshold, joining the presence of the surrounding terrain to that which exceeds this open presence, to that which is hidden *beyond* the horizon. The horizon carries the promise of something more, something *other*”.<sup>114</sup> So, as Gadamer claims, the act of understanding itself is a movement of transcendence, a moving beyond the existent; the idea of horizon, therefore, not only shapes the landscape of the enclosed garden,

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<sup>110</sup> Moore, *The Re-Enchantment of Everyday Life*, 1.

<sup>111</sup> Knott, *The Location of Religion*, 37.

<sup>112</sup> See Massimo Venturi Ferriolo, “Cardada by Paolo Burgi: The Experience of Gaze,” in *Contemporary Garden Aesthetics, Creations and Interpretations*, Michael Conan, ed. (Washington DC. Dumbarton Oaks, 2007), 199-221, for a wonderful essay describing the role of sense experience, especially that of the gaze, in the aesthetic contemplation of landscape.

<sup>113</sup> See also Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 301-305 for a discussion of horizon in terms of the hermeneutical inquiry, emphasizing that the horizon is always something into which we move and that moves with us.

<sup>114</sup> Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 210.

but as a spatial trope it opens up its limits to a fuller understanding of the spirit of the place.<sup>115</sup>

Edward S. Casey posits that the horizon is that aspect in everyday experience that embodies the cosmogonic separation of Earth from Sky. The horizon's strange power lies in its ability to distinguish these two regions from each other in the course of our daily existence and is as such the dynamic basis of the gap between Heaven and Earth. "The experienced horizon is a central creative force in the field of visual perception, especially beheld at the beginning or ending of the day". Discussing the primeval patterns of the Navajo, he emphasizes the world-creating character of the horizon and its unique capacity to "bring earth and sky into active contiguity with one another, while respecting their differences as distinct cosmic regions". Thus, every horizon simultaneously conjoins and separates. Hence it could be argued that the "horizon at land's end holds both earth and sky together as two contiguous domains of the same surrounding space and teases them apart as two conclusively different regions", offering a simultaneous experience of two worlds consecutively.<sup>116</sup>

The idea of horizon, therefore, provides an extension from the "insistent reality of the here and now into that optative space or time – the space-time – of the imaginary"; it marks a "change in ontological register".<sup>117</sup> The horizon, as a result, is not merely a rigid backdrop against which experiences are staged, it moves and realigns itself with the experiencing subject, producing new spaces with multiple possibilities for interpretation and meaning.

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<sup>115</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 250.

<sup>116</sup> Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 11.

<sup>117</sup> Vincent Crapanzano, *Imaginative Horizons: An Essay in Literary-Philosophical Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 14.

The enclosed garden encapsulates those architectural archetypes, Aben and De Wit name as clearing and oasis. A clearing provides a natural inner world isolated from the dangers of the outlying wilderness. It offers a place of light and clarity against the darkness of its surrounding environment. In spatial terms this free region is still part of the wider landscapes surrounding it. Its openness affords a view of the sky above, “drawing an imaginary line linking heaven and earth. Where this line touches the earth the undifferentiated ground plane acquires a virtual centre”. Similarly the oasis forms a natural inner world in the openness of the desert. In their words:

Both oasis and clearing spatially and visually complement their context as counterpoints in the landscape. The oasis, an entity in a horizontal plane, visualizes the line linking earth and sky and constitutes the centre of the unbroken circle that is the horizon. The vertical alignment of the axis and the connection between oasis and horizon – the horizontal alignment – together give the coordinates of the space. The oasis is a microcosm, a complete world in itself. At the centre is the source, the condition necessary for life on which the entire oasis depends.<sup>118</sup>

The horizon, in both clearing and oasis, simultaneously brings together and separates the landscape, a function that finds its echo in the rectilinear walled boundary of the enclosed garden. This containment of space is emphasized by the “directly visible presence of limitless sky. Limited dimensions against endless space, the mass of the walls against the space of the garden, the invisibility of the world outside against the view of the sky”.

Seeing that the “horizon is replaced by a slice of sky, the tensionality between the ground plane and the celestial plane generates a vertical alignment in the garden”. Within a rectilinear walled space a transcendental center occurs, as nature is

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<sup>118</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 25.

perceived moving from an outward wall towards to a center and upwards towards the sky.<sup>119</sup>



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Consequently, within the boundary of the enclosed garden an area becomes clear and free, a space opening itself up to an array of sensory and symbolic experiences. For as Heidegger so succinctly states: “A boundary is not that at which something stops, but as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something *begins its presencing*. That is why the concept is that of *horismos*, that is, the horizon, the boundary. Space is in essence that for which room has been made, that which is let into bounds”.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>119</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 37, 220. See also Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 36-47, on the universal symbolism of the center as “axis mundi” which is the connection between earth and heaven and the center of the world. An interesting argument is made by Claudio Ardohein, “Mystical Experience and Sacred Landscape,” in *The Poetry of Life in Literature*, Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, ed. (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2000), 159-178. He claims that sacred space is the projection of a human symbolic inner geography and mythology. Therefore, the consecration of an enclosed space is the reenactment of the creation process, obtaining order and nurturing. The horizon which is the natural bond between the two is broken by accidents like mountains and trees, which can then be considered as communication points between them, therefore, gateways to other worlds. This allows for a symbolic reading of “sacred” landscapes which can promote mystical states.

<sup>120</sup> Gloucester Cathedral, London. Photo courtesy of <http://www.sacred-destinations.com> accessed 22 February 2009.

<sup>121</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 152.

Edward S. Casey emphasizes that a boundary is unlike a limit, since a boundary is two-sided at once, for it is simultaneously inclusive and exclusive. Thus, in a similar way, as the previous section has shown, the *hortus conclusus* can be experienced in the manner of a boundary, but it is also a boundary in terms of boundary as horizon, as space which is “an active source of presencing: within its close embrace, things get located and begin to happen”.<sup>122</sup> The enclosed garden creates its own boundaries, making room for new experiences, with either emphasis on social activity or personal experience.

It also, concurrently, expands these boundaries as it reflects individual or universal meanings about nature and culture. These shifts in the horizon allow for the garden’s form to have both semiotic and symbolic meanings, as it can refer mutually to the function or to the underlying idea of the garden. These meanings are also the layers behind the formal references of appearances, as a garden referring to the gardens of paradise (appearance) also, then, refers to the abstraction attendant upon it, the idea of happiness and eternity (meaning). The boundaries of the garden can, moreover, create a garden which is a totality in itself, unbounded by context and illustrating an abstract idea, crystallized around a central point, a locus generated from within and which leaves an impression of unity. This garden, as in the monastic cloister garden, becomes a microcosm, a world in itself.<sup>123</sup>

The enclosed garden brings new horizons of understanding; however, it can be argued that these impressions only achieve concrete reality when a person’s experience of the garden is total. Likewise, Yi-Fu Tuan states that space has existence when it is experienced through all the senses as well as with the active

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<sup>122</sup> Casey, *The Fate of Place*, 63.

<sup>123</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 18-19.

and reflective mind.<sup>124</sup> The world, according to Abram, is an “intertwined matrix of sensations and perceptions, a collective field of experience lived through many different angles” but the body<sup>125</sup> is the “very locus of the experiencing subject”.<sup>126</sup> It is this experiencing body which, through reflection, thought and knowledge, assigns value to places. In accordance with the argument of space, finding its meaning through the experiencing body, Edward S. Casey writes that:

Body and landscape present themselves as coeval epicenters around which places pivot and radiate. They are at the very least, the bounds of places. In my embodied being I am *just at* a place as its inner boundary; a surrounding landscape, on the other hand, is *just beyond* that place as its outer boundary. Between the two boundaries – and very much as a function of their interplay – implacement occurs. Place is what takes place between body and landscape. Thanks to the double horizon that body and landscape provide, a place is a locale bounded on both sides, near and far.<sup>127</sup>

Contained by the enclosed garden these sensory-tangible allusions assume a much more intimate rapport. Within its space it brings together the expansiveness of the landscape within reach of a close encounter with the human body. The enclosed garden is a condensed space brought about by two divergent spatial concepts. “The vertical endlessness of the sky is emphasized by intensifying the containment of the space” while this same containment is put into perspective by different means to

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<sup>124</sup> Tuan, *Space and Place*, 18.

<sup>125</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 235 writes that “Our own body is in the world as the heart is in the organism: it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive, it breathes life into it and sustains it inwardly, and with it forms a system”. Tuan, *Space and Place*, 34-35. Man, by his mere presence imposes a schema upon this space. From his body space opens out before him and becomes immediately differentiated into front-back and right-left axes. Coordinates of vertical-horizontal, top-bottom, front-back, and right-left positions of the body are extrapolated onto space and become part of his corporeal schema of establishing himself in the world. Space becomes articulated in accordance with man’s corporeal schema and that implies that objective reference points such as specific landmarks, as well as the cardinal positions, conform to the coordinates and intentions of the human body. See also Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 43-105 for his views on the body as continually taking a person into place. “It is at once agent and vehicle, articulator and witness of being-in-place”.

<sup>126</sup> Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 32.

<sup>127</sup> Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 39, 45.

suggest a great expanse.<sup>128</sup> It allows for the establishing of new spheres of presence in which new truths can be assigned and explored, leading to the attribution of religious or sacred meanings to its surrounding space.<sup>129</sup>

Consequently, these impressions become compressed into memorable spatial images which generate an “architecture of spatial consciousness”.<sup>130</sup> The enclosed garden provides a definite, sensory model where specific architectural details, through myth and ritual, are made familiar and become compressed into memorable spatial images filled with meaning.

Outside the gardens, within the wider horizon, space becomes a symbol of freedom, simultaneously suggesting that which lies open, or in consequence, that which is in the future. This freedom is also, however, often associated with a fear of the unknowing, to be exposed and vulnerable and ultimately death. When describing the rising sun as observed from where the observer is standing, Ibn Arabi substitutes the word „veil“, for horizon, in the same way the new horizon, created by the garden boundary, veils the negative associations connected with openness, unveiling the rising of a bright new world, a place of shelter within the vastness of space. Tied with the rhetorical topos of paradise, this new space offers possibilities for new

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<sup>128</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 210.

<sup>129</sup> Knott, *The Location of Religion*, 19, 39. See also Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, 78. He argues that these spatial constructs, however, also carries with them strong symbolic, metaphorical and religious significance and as such becomes the basis of those “value hierarchies in which “high” and “low” are axiologically definitive”. See Tuan, *Space and Place*, 37-50 on attribution of values to words such as high and low. He also discusses the fact that spatial terms are closely tied to terms of expression of interpersonal relationships and that some polarized spatial words such as this/that and us/them carry with them highly emotional and political innuendos. See Smith, *To Take Place*, 27-35 for a discussion on space as orientation, especially his discussion on Kant’s views in relation to the body, that the relationship to the human body and the experience of it orientates a person in space and confers meaning to place.

<sup>130</sup> Quantrill, *Environmental Memory*, 48.



perceptions and experiences, to give form and substance to the beyond, or to that sphere that which lies outside space and time.



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In addition, within the scope of the enclosed garden, the rhythm of nature, the circular course of the seasons and the ever-recurring cycles of growth become intensified within the “focal points of the here and now in a whole that stretches out indefinitely”.<sup>132</sup> Dewey continues to explain that, even though, it is a bounding horizon; it is never free from the sense of something beyond. Thus, within the limited world directly sensed, it is experienced as part of a larger and inclusive whole. “We might expand the field from the narrower to the wider. But however broad the field, it is still felt as not the whole; the margins shade into that indefinite expanse beyond which imagination calls the universe”.

The horizon of the enclosed garden simultaneously veils and unveils; creates new experiences and new opportunities for interpretation and understanding. For Dewey, these experiences, which can also be associated to a work of art, become even

<sup>131</sup> Moissac Abbey, France. Photo courtesy of <http://www.sacred-destinations.com>, accessed 22 February 2009.

<sup>132</sup> Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 201-202.

mystical in the degree in which feelings of the unlimited become intensified within the limited.<sup>133</sup> In his words:

A work of art elicits and accentuates this quality of being a whole and of belonging to the larger, all-inclusive, whole which is the universe in which we live. This fact, I think, is the explanation of the feeling of exquisite intelligibility and clarity we have in the presence of an object that is experienced with esthetic intensity. It explains also the religious feeling that accompanies intense esthetic perception. We are, as it were, introduced into a world beyond this world which is nevertheless the deeper reality of the world in which we live our ordinary experiences.

However, as Beldon, C. Lane points out, all human perception of landscape is unremittingly interactive. Although our embodied presence demands that we cannot know the world without being dynamically engaged in it, this engagement also entails acknowledgement of other distinctive interactions.<sup>134</sup> Even though all places are sensed, memories of past personal and cultural experiences play a part in conditioning the perception of place. The totality of these factors becomes part of the complete spatio-sensory construct.<sup>135</sup>

Simon Schama believes that landscapes are “culture before they are nature; constructs of the imagination projected onto wood and water and rock”. However, he argues, that it should also be acknowledged that “once a certain idea of landscape, a myth, a vision, establishes itself in an actual place, it has a peculiar way of muddling categories, of making metaphors more real than their referents; of becoming, in fact,

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<sup>133</sup> See also Walter, *Placeways*, 74 for his view of topos or place as a container of experience that has the mysterious energy to lead the mind. Lane, *Landscapes of the Sacred*, 53 argues that actual embodied experience in encountering a place perceived a sacred is crucial to the sense of “awe” that one attributes to it. It becomes only known when one participate fully in it and appreciate all its visual, auditory, olfactory and kinesthetic qualities.

<sup>134</sup> Lane, *Landscapes of the Sacred*, 53. See Malpas, *Place and Experience*, 157 for his view that a creature to have experience of the world is to be a creature “always located within a complex but unitary place that encompasses the creature itself, other creatures and a multiplicity of objects and environmental features”.

<sup>135</sup> Malnar and Vodvarka, *Sensory Design*, 3. See also pg. 21-22 for their description of spatial constructs and pg. 41-52 for their analysis of positions held on sensory responses.

part of the scenery". Within the scope of the enclosed garden, sensory spatial constructs can be interpreted and recognized in terms of sacred categories with multiple understandings.<sup>136</sup>

Similarly, E. V. Walter states that the quality of a place, or that which is experienced there, is shaped by memories and expectations, by real or imagined stories and events.<sup>137</sup> Memory and imagination are subjective qualities that are crucial elements contributing to the quality of place. Consequently, the enclosed garden as spatial construct can be understood metaphorically as well as literally, where its specificity relies on prior knowledge as well as immediate sensations perceived through the senses.

As horizons open up frontiers, extending the range of perceptions, the enclosed garden can extend from the unrelenting reality of the here and now into that, which is in its very nature inaccessible. Yi- Fu Tuan correctly points out that experience can be direct and intimate, or indirect and conceptual, being mediated through

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<sup>136</sup> Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 61. See also Joy Malnar and Vodvarka, *Sensory Design*, 18. They claim that the spatio-sensory constructs are those types that reflect the collective unconscious in a specific format and that it is perceptible in both cognitive and sensory terms. See also pg. 52-58 for their discussion on various studies concerning the influence of culture on visual perception. In the introduction of *The Varieties of Sensory Experience* (Toronto Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 3-30, David Howes, ed., expounds an anthropology of the senses which main concern is with how the patterning of sense experience varies from one culture to the next in accordance with meanings and emphasis attached to the different modalities of perception. See also David Howes, ed., *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader* (New York: Berg, 2005). Especially the chapter "Places Sensed, Senses Placed: Toward a Sensuous Epistemology of Environments," by Steven Feld, 179-191 for his arguments that perceptual engagements are critical to conceptual constructions of place and that the "lived experience involve constant shifts in sensory figures and grounds, constant potentials for multisensory or cross-sensory interactions or correspondences". Likewise Constance Classen, *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the Senses in History and across Cultures* (London: Routledge, 1993), 1 claims that different cultures present very different ways of „making sense“ of the world. Interesting is his chapter two, "The Odour of the Rose", 15-36, in which he touches upon olfactory imagery found in the Bible and literature such as The Song of Songs and consequently medieval gardens and early monastery gardens strong emphasis on scent. See Tuan, *Space and Place*, 5-7 for his discussion on three consistent themes found in the ways people attach meaning and organize space.

<sup>137</sup> Walter, *Placeways*, 117.

symbols.<sup>138</sup> The enclosed garden is, to use David Abram's words, a "living field, an open and dynamic landscape subject to its own moods and metamorphosis".<sup>139</sup>

The enclosed garden relies on its sensory aspects, which Malcolm Quantrill calls the *genius loci* or sense of place, to broaden its imaginative horizons.

We may say that in the natural environment the supernatural extends itself into our consciousness through that presence we call the *genius loci*. In turn, man responds by implanting the spirit of his aspirations into the man-made environment...The concept of *genius loci* necessarily involves a meeting, and merging, of existence with spirit. In such a place, our existential or concrete awareness extends into the spiritual or abstract dimension. An interaction between existence and spirit expresses the multidimensionality of human aspiration. The expression or presence of this multidimensional aspiration is the necessary prerequisite to a true work of art; it is the quality that imparts a memorable energy to the whole, that establishes a poetic dimension.<sup>140</sup>

Grasping the *genius loci* or spirit of the place asks for a special form of perception, a particular kind of knowledge which Schopenhauer argued could only be obtained through aesthetical experience. Within this experience the horizons of the universal and the particular merges and a "cognitive glimpse of the Platonic Idea" is captured and "in and through the object the timeless reality of which the phenomenal object itself is merely an ephemeral image" is seen.<sup>141</sup>

The enclosed garden has its own unique reality, where unbounded natural space stands beside bounded internal space. The specific characteristics of form, material, colour and directional emphasis not only provide a definite set of images to the garden, but in accordance to the idea of *horismos*, these characteristics also move beyond the literal, affording multiple opportunities for hermeneutical engagement.

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<sup>138</sup> Tuan, *Space and Place*, 6.

<sup>139</sup> Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, 32.

<sup>140</sup> Quantrill, *The Environmental Memory*, 48.

<sup>141</sup> Brian Magee, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 165.

The horizon as creative life force allows for a matrix of energies, it generates representations, stimulates the imagination and causes changes of awareness.<sup>142</sup>

Through an embodied experience of the enclosed garden a new transcendental epistemology can be formulated, as the garden allows for ways to posit a knowledge of that, which metaphorically, lies beyond the horizon and which is, thus, in its very essence unfathomable.

The enclosed garden, as in the monastic cloister garden, focuses experience within a specific sensorial-spatial construct, to reach further than the horizon in an anticipation of an eschatological landscape outside of time.



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<sup>142</sup> Walter, *Placeways*, 131.

<sup>143</sup> Abbey of Fontfroide, Photo courtesy of <http://www.sacred-destinations.com>, accessed 22 February 2009

# CHAPTER THREE

## The Monastic Cloister Garden

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And I forsook the folly that is cast upon the earth:  
I stripped it off and cast it from me.  
And the Lord renewed me with His garment,  
and possessed me with His Light.  
And from above He gave me immortal rest,  
and I became like the land that blossoms,  
and rejoice in its fruits.

For the Lord is like the sun,  
shining upon the face of the land:  
My eyes were enlightened,  
and my face received the Dew,  
and my breath (spirit) took pleasure  
in the pleasant fragrance of the Lord.  
And He brought me to His paradise,  
wherein is the abundance of the Lord's pleasure.

And I contemplated blooming and fruit-bearing Trees,  
whose crowns had grown themselves.  
Their branches were in new leaf,  
and their fruits were shining,  
and from an immortal land arose their roots.  
And a River of Gladness watered them,  
and all about them,  
in the land of eternal life.

Then I worshipped the Lord because of His glory,  
and I said, "Blessed, O Lord,  
are they who are planted in Thy land,  
and who have a place in Thy paradise,  
and who thrive in the growth of Thy Trees,  
and have passed from darkness into light."

Behold all thy labourers are fair,  
who work good works (or „practise spiritual practice”),

and turn away from wickedness  
to the kindness that is Thine.  
For they turned themselves away  
from the bitterness of the (evil) trees,  
when they were planted in Thy land.

And everything became like a remembrance of Thyself,  
and an eternal reminder of the faithful Servants.  
For there is abundant room in Thy paradise, o Lord;  
There is nothing therein that is unfruitful,  
but everything is filled with Thy fruit.  
Glory be to Thee, O God,  
the delight of paradise forever.

Hallelujah<sup>1</sup>

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We are a garden wall'd around,  
Chosen and made peculiar ground,  
A little spot enclos'd by grace,  
Out of the world's wide wilderness.

Like trees of myrrh and spice we stand,  
Planted by God the Father's hand;  
And all his springs in Sion flow;  
To make the young plantation grow.

Awake, O heavenly wind, and come,  
Blow on this garden of perfume;  
Spirit divine, descend and breathe  
A gracious gale on plants beneath.<sup>2</sup>

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We look not at things which are seen  
But at the things which are not seen  
For the things which are seen are temporal  
But the things which are not seen are eternal.<sup>3</sup>

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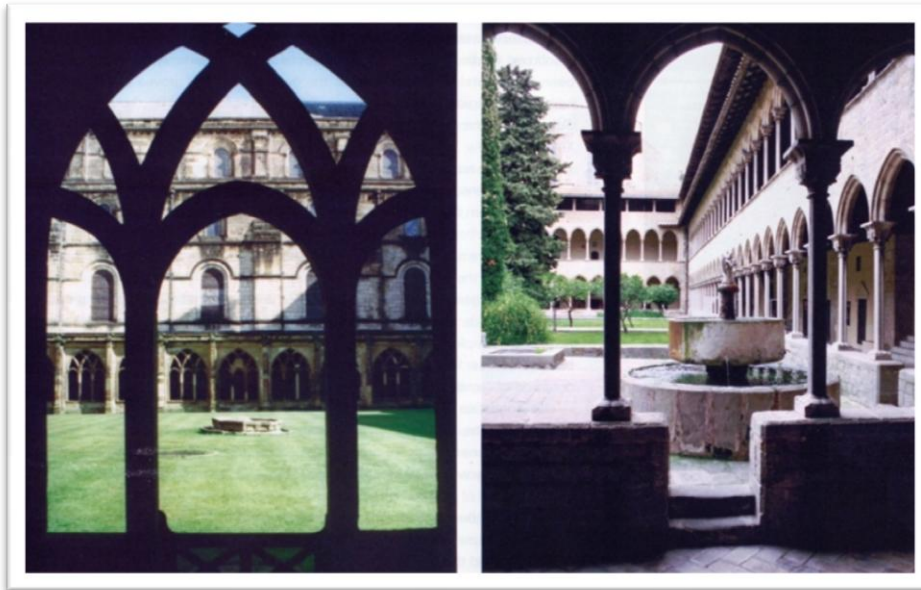
<sup>1</sup> John Davidson, *The Odes of Solomon: Mystical Songs from the Time of Jesus* (Bath: Clear Books, 2004), 50, Ode 11.

<sup>2</sup> James M. Winchell, *An Arrangement: Of the Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs of the Rev. Isaac Watts* (Boston: Lincoln & Edmands, 1821), 542. Hymn 74.

<sup>3</sup> Saint Paul, 2 Cor. 4:18.

# M

## onastic Gardening: A Brief Overview



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According to Paul Meyvaert, the earliest reference to monastic gardens can be found in the origins of the monastic movement itself.<sup>5</sup> When Monasticism originated in Egypt, in the early fourth century, many small landowners living in Egyptian villages, after converting to Christianity, questioned whether their lifestyles were fully compatible to the life of a devout Christian. Many believed that a full Christian life was to disown earthly joys and pleasures and follow a life of self-discipline, celibacy

<sup>4</sup> Durham Cloister, England (Left), Monasterio de Pedralbes Cloister, Spain (Right), in Tom Turner *Garden History: Philosophy and Design 2000 BC – 2000 AD* (London: Spon Press, 2005), 113.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Meyvaert, "The Medieval Monastic Garden," in *Medieval Gardens*, Elizabeth B. MacDougall, ed. (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1986), 23-54. On medieval gardening see William Howard Adams, *Gardens through History: Nature Perfected* (New York, London: Abbeville Press, 1991), 49-58; F. R. Cowell, *The Garden as Fine Art: From Antiquity to Modern Times* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978), 78-89; Mick Hales, *Monastic Gardens* (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 2000); Anne Jennings, *Medieval Gardens* (London: English Heritage, 2004); Sylvia Landsberg, *The Medieval Garden* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003); Teresa McLean, *Medieval English Gardens* (London: Collins, 1981). See also Turner, *Garden History*, 122 and Elisabeth B MacDougall, ed., *Medieval Gardening*, for a short history on Monastic gardens.



and ultimately a withdrawal from the world.<sup>6</sup> They left for the desert where they either lived as hermits, or bounded together into communities. From this very early beginning gardening became part of their lifestyle, as they had to provide for their own food and nourishment.

Although, according to him, the idea of desert fathers brings a picture of a stark desert landscape to mind, the early sources draw a more varied portrait. The Nile valley was a very fruitful area and even though the men withdrew from their villages, they were still able to cultivate the land. However, the further they withdrew into the wilderness, the harder their living conditions became, but essentially, they still had to grow their own vegetables for food. Thus, the earliest monastic gardens on record were vegetable gardens.

While the eremitical and cenobitic forms of Monasticism developed, according to the earliest monastic literature, side by side, monastic gardening appeared more prominent in the cenobitic tradition.<sup>7</sup> From the beginning it was believed that the Christian ascetic ideal could best be achieved in a community which shared a common life, thus who wore the same dress, ate the same food and shared the same living conditions. These monasteries grew rapidly and walls were built around them to create an independent Christian community separated from the rest of the world. Pachomius, considered as the founder of Monasticism, was the first person to create a physical wall around the monastery, placing the garden within an enclosure, producing the monastic walled garden.

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<sup>6</sup> See Marilyn Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), for a history of Monasticism.

<sup>7</sup> See also Daniel Faure & Veronique Rouchon Mouilleron, *Cloisters of Europe: Gardens of Prayer* (New York: Viking Studio, 2001), 8-46, for a short history and discussion of the *Hortus Conclusus* in cloistered life.

Meyvaert further points out that the Middle Ages cannot be regarded as a whole, as it covers a long period of time. Thus, although, the early monastic period was the first to draw a high wall around the monastery and gardens, they were not the ones that exploited the theme of hortus conclusus. In the early monastic era the purpose of the wall was not only to facilitate control of the monks, but also to create an isolated Christian fortress as a protest against the military pagan environment. It is only in the later monastic era that idea of hortus conclusus assumed a much greater symbolic significance.<sup>8</sup>

The later monastic orders developed within the Christian culture of the Western world. Those monks who renounced the world and entered the great monasteries of Europe were regarded as superior to those Christians who remained within the comforts and pleasures of the world. Monastic life was based on the beliefs and lifestyles of the primitive Christian community in Jerusalem, as described in Acts 4:32. Within these communities themes of unity of heart and soul, common property and the renunciation of the world were valued and protected. The monastic life was seen as a quest for Christian authenticity and as such the ascetic ideal called for a self-supporting community.<sup>9</sup>

The idea of a self contained garden influenced the rule of St Benedict (529 AD) who initiated a self-sufficient and corporate monastic lifestyle. Not only physically isolating the community, the walled enclosure of the monastery also took on a moral connotation. Inside the walls, the monastery served as a spiritual refuge and escape from the overwhelming fears and doubts that overwhelmed a person, both body and

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<sup>8</sup> Meyvaert, "The Medieval Monastic Garden," 47.

<sup>9</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *A Brief History of Heaven* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 19-20.

soul. Monastic life was seen as a quest for Christian authenticity and marked a recovery of a more Biblical way of life.<sup>10</sup> Religion found expression in architecture, as the monastery functioned as a setting for the ascetic ideal. The church was thought of as the only guardian of Christian values in a turbulent world. Chaos could only be tamed with a strict religious ideal regarding morals and duties leading to a doctrine of atonement and ethics, which became exemplified by the monastic model. St Benedict's regulations for monastic life interweaved spiritual and physical labour into a strict daily routine whereby a specific ordering of time and place occurred.<sup>11</sup>

His philosophy flourished into the development of monasteries as places of retreat which became more or less completely self supporting. This development shaped the establishment of several types of monastic gardens. Gardens were established to provide recreation, refreshment, food production, medicines, ornamentation and a place to bury the dead.<sup>12</sup> Aben and De Wit argue that "these gardens, set within the introverted ensemble, represented the landscape. By placing work and contemplation on equal footing St Benedict, as it were, set the garden free. Elevated above its role as production unit, it was now a permissible source of pleasure".<sup>13</sup>

The plan of the monastery of St Gall provides a unique source to the layout of a medieval monastery.<sup>14</sup> On this plan clearly distinguished gardens can be identified. The orchard combined with the cemetery, a combination which lends to it a powerful symbolic meaning, associated with salvation and resurrection. The monastic herb garden, offering herbs and flowers became associated with a pleasant place, which

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<sup>10</sup> McGrath, *A Brief History of Heaven*, 20.

<sup>11</sup> Rob Aben and Saskia de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden: History and Development of the Hortus Conclusus and its Reintroduction into the Present-day Urban Landscape* (Rotterdam, 010, 1999), 22.

<sup>12</sup> Landsberg, *The Medieval Garden*, 34. See also Meyvaert, "The Medieval Monastic Garden," 28-30 for a discussion of gardeners and their duties.

<sup>13</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 23.

<sup>14</sup> For a detailed discussion on St Gall, see Walter Horn and Ernest Born, *The Plan of St Gall* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

played upon the literary tradition of locus amoenus and the theme of Paradise as the ultimate pleasant place.

According to Teresa McLean, gardens play a very important role in the Old Testament. Gardening became closely intertwined with the idea of paradise as well as the recreation of a paradise, whereby it became a perfect occupation for Christian monks and nuns, who devoted themselves to a life of prayer, supported by manual work.<sup>15</sup> These monks and nuns lived in a private world of prayer, community, stability and enclosure. This evolved into a close spiritual relationship between monasticism and gardening. The garden became symbolic of the monastic life itself where planting, labour, love and burial became closely connected with the idea of purity. This interconnectedness, consequently, also contributed to the development of the enclosed garden as symbol of the soul. Spiritual growth was interpreted through horticultural explanations and a rich allegorical topos dependant on garden imagery developed.<sup>16</sup>

In agreement, Tom Turner contends that gardens in the Bible assumed a spiritual quality, and that Creation itself, in Gen. 2: 7-10, is explained as God making a garden. It is, therefore, according to him, possible to define Religious as a specific garden type, since religious objectives lie behind these gardens and they be can be thought of in terms of sacred landscapes.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, Francis Beswick writes that the gardens of specific religions reflect specific beliefs and values.<sup>18</sup> The Christian monastic garden became a microcosm of the Christian world, inspired by Christian beliefs and values. These gardens were characterized by beauty and utility. Beauty

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<sup>15</sup> McLean, *Medieval English Garden*, 13.

<sup>16</sup> Hales, *Monastic Garden*, 10-12.

<sup>17</sup> Turner *Garden History*, 12-13.

<sup>18</sup> Francis Beswick, *Shoots out of Eden* (Suffolk: Arima, 2007), 11.

as the means by which humans give glory to God and creating and tending a garden as an act of prayer, both can be considered as an offer made to God and becomes part of the ongoing dialogue between God and man.<sup>19</sup> The survey of monastic literature, then, also reveals a variety of attitudes on the merits of various places or settings for the religious life. Most monasteries were prepared to enjoy the beauties of nature as they believed it to be beneficial for body and soul.<sup>20</sup>

Many of these monasteries started in the ruins of abandoned Roman Villas where the four-squared rectangular enclosure provided not only physical shelter, but a certain manner of psychological protection from the hostile reminders of human frailty and mortality, as well.<sup>21</sup>

It is, therefore, also the cloister garth which lies at the heart of the monastery, which became the ultimate representation of the monastic vocation and a deeply significant metaphorical space.<sup>22</sup> Christopher Brooke describes the cloister as the physical center of the monastic world, having an amazing uniformity in shape, design and function.<sup>23</sup> Similarly Mick Hales claims that the cloister as a place of simplicity belies its deep power found in its practical and symbolic components.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> See Meyvaert, "The Medieval Monastic Garden," 48-49 for a discussion of the use of garden imagery to develop a spiritual theme.

<sup>20</sup> See Rose Standish Nichols, *English Pleasure Gardens* (Boston: David R. Godine, 2003), 38-56, for a description of the various Monastic orders and their connection with gardening. See also Beswick, *Shoots out of Eden*.

<sup>21</sup> Adams, *Nature Perfected*, 49, 52. See Christopher Brooke, *The Age of the Cloister: The Story of Monastic Life in the Middle Ages* (New Jersey: Hidden Spring, 2001) and Walter Horn, "On the Origins of the Medieval Cloister," *Gesta* 12, 1/2 (1973): 13-52, for a discussion on the origin of the architecture of early monasteries.

<sup>22</sup> Meyvaert, "The Medieval Monastic Claustum," *Gesta* 12, 1/2 (1973): 53-58. On the cloister garth, see Beswick, *Shoots out of Eden*, 31-33; Megan Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings: Thirteenth-Century English Cistercian Monasteries* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 47-112; Nichols, *English Pleasure Gardens*, 42-48; Landsberg, *The Medieval Garden* 35-36; McLean, *Medieval English Gardens*, 20-21. For a detailed description of an example of a cloister see Roberta Gilchrist, *Norwich Cathedral Close: The Evolution of the English Cathedral Landscape* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005), 66-93.

<sup>23</sup> Brooke, *The Age of the Cloister*, 6.

<sup>24</sup> Hales, *Monastic Garden*, 13.



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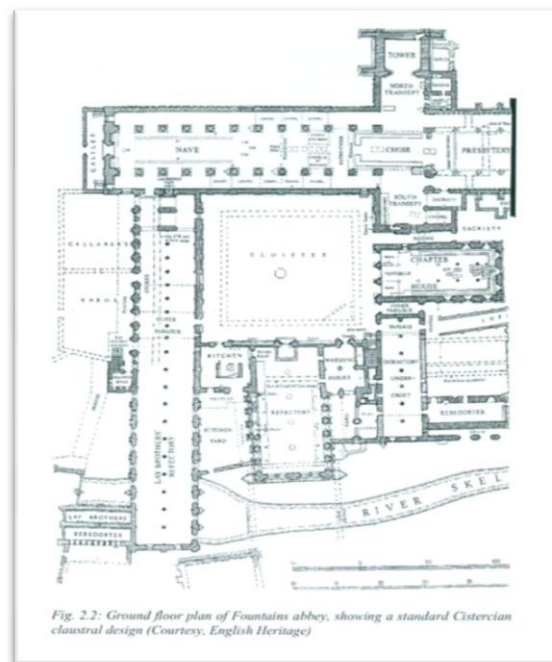
The cloister became the most characteristic feature of the coenobitic monastery. It consisted of a church and three ranges of buildings placed around a central square or courtyard. This open space in the centre of the courtyard was flanked by the cloister alleys or walks, which in turn provided access to the church and other facilities. These walkways also functioned as places where the monks or nuns may sit or walk, while reflecting or in prayer. The cloister garth was a lawn of green grass which could have paths across it, dividing it into quarters, with either a tree, pool or fountain in the center. Teresa McLean calls the cloister garth the “meditative kernel” of the cloister, but simultaneously it was also the center of communal activity.<sup>26</sup> In Megan Cassidy- Welch’s words:

The cloister site may seem to serve a number of spatial functions within the monastic precinct, including demarcation and enclosure. Primarily, the four sides of the cloister garth demarcated the boundaries of the main sites of liturgy, discipline, domesticity and labour within the monastery: the north cloister arcade joined the church, the eastern arcade was dominated by the entrance to the chapter house, the southern arcade was associated with the refectory, while the

<sup>25</sup> San Lorenzo, Rome, in Turner *Garden History*, 113.

<sup>26</sup> McLean, *Medieval English Gardens*, 20.

western arcade marked the domain of *converse*, whose work was predominantly manual. The demarcation of these particular areas of monastic activity reflects the integral status of each in the monastic world...The cloister site as the innermost monastic enclosure, was therefore an area generally inaccessible to secular people, but highly accessible to choir monks...More specifically, the cloister was one of the central sites for the expression and practice of communal rites. These rites were both liturgical, such as processions and domestic such as shaving...Such rituals may be seen to reflect the communal emphasis on monastic life as it was practiced in the cloister itself.<sup>27</sup>



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The cloister garth or garden's form is surprisingly fixed, according to Terry Comito, who, moreover, states that when one speaks of the form of gardens, one is actually talking about ways of organizing space.<sup>29</sup> Gardening, as an art of the environment, is also evidence of how a person or community is related to the world. Essentially, the monastic gardens gained their value from that which took place in these gardens. These gardens and most specifically the cloister garth's form facilitated its usage and

<sup>27</sup> Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings*, 51, 54.

<sup>28</sup> Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings*, 51.

<sup>29</sup> Terry Comito, *The Idea of the Garden in the Renaissance* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1978), 25.

also the rituals taking place there. This organized space bespoke of their specific view of the world and how they define their landscape.



30

Monks and nuns, within the monastery, regarded their landscape as consisting of well-defined spaces and they had, therefore, no interest in the periphery. Their worldview was introverted and centralized, boundlessness was only a quality attributed to God. Since Divine infinity was beyond mental comprehension, matter could only be understood in terms of the finite. Therefore, the only graspable space was finite, a void surrounded by walls. “Medieval society was characterized by the tug-of-war between the restricted horizon of the open space and the infinite reaches of the world of Christian thinking. On the one hand there was the horizon as a real border of contained space, and on the other, the horizon as something infinitely far away, an idea charged with fantasy and mystery”.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Comito, *The Idea of the Garden in the Renaissance*, 55.

<sup>31</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 25-27.



The enclosed garden of the cloister garth became a physical framework on which multiple dialogues could be imprinted. Within its boundaries, it posited a religious epistemology found in metaphorical archetypes, categories of sacred space and constructed experience.



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<sup>32</sup> Syon Abbey, England. <http://www.kellerbook.com/today.htm>, accessed 22 February 2009.

## The Cloister Garden: Paradise on Earth

Furthermore as the church signifieth the Church Truimphant, so the cloister signifieth the celestial Paradise, where there will be one and the same heart fulfilling the commands of GOD and loving HIM: where all things will be possessed in common, because that of which one hath less, he will rejoice to see more abounding in another, for GOD SHALL BE IN ALL.<sup>33</sup>

Around 1216, Matthew, precentor of Rievaulx abbey, wrote a few poems and a series of letters to the prior of Beverly Minster. In his poems and letters he warns against the depravity found in the world, emphasizing the purity to be found in the monastery:

O fount of gardens, paupers" open gate,  
You cure the sick, disease alleviate.<sup>34</sup>

The monastery, in his view, is the site where the gate to heaven can be found, it is a "paradisaal garden, where lilies of the valley and roses grow and where the scent of cinnamon, myrrh, and other spices sweeten the air. The monastery is a refuge, a haven and an open door". It is a way of life that will "lead the monk to the gates of heaven".<sup>35</sup> The monastery is a garden of delights and those that participate in its delights will find that the gates of paradise will be open to them, taking them away from the evil and sin of the world.

Cassidy-Welch explains it as follows:

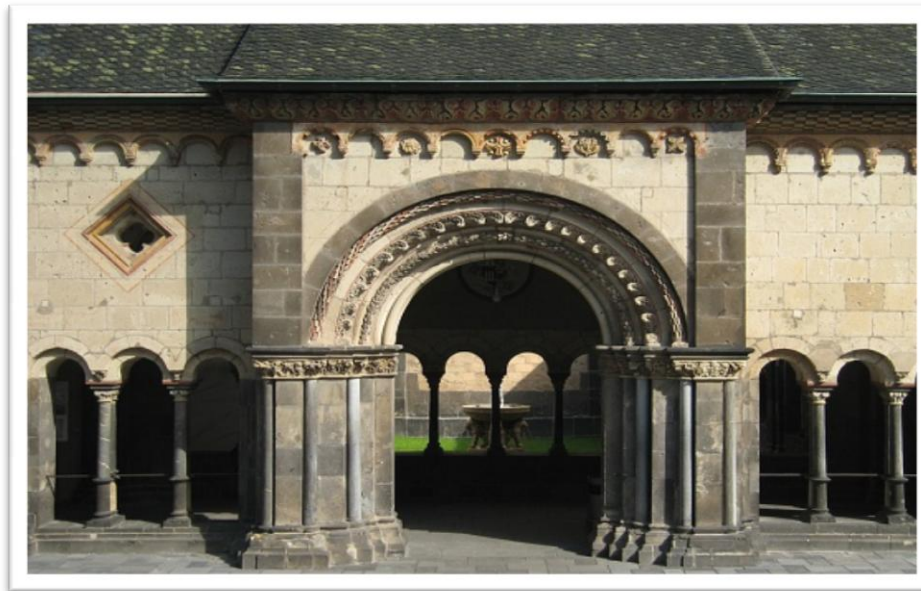
In Matthew's view, the desire for the world is antithetical to the inner „paradise" of life in the cloister. Here, the term *claustrum* signifies the living out of the monastic experience, and in particular, the inner life of the monastery. The equation of

<sup>33</sup> William Durandus, *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments: A Translation of the First Book of the Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*, introductory notes John Mason Neale and Benjamin Webb (Leeds: T.W. Green, 1843), 34-36 (42).

<sup>34</sup> A.G. Rigg, *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature, 1066-1422* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 136.

<sup>35</sup> Matthew, quoted by Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings*, 64-65.

cloister and paradise in this case is the equation between the contemplative, enclosed life of the monk, and the heavenly peace that will result from the pursuit of this life. Matthew uses the architectural image of the cloister in order to represent the enclosure of monastic life in general.<sup>36</sup>



37

However, understanding the enclosed garden of the monastery, as an archetype of paradise, notice should be taken of Matthew's multiple use of the words door and gate in his equation of the monastery with paradise. Monastic life did not only offer a new world but it was also a portal to the new world that awaited man outside of time, the celestial paradise of God.

Alister McGrath claims that humans have the unique capacity to imagine, that our understanding of the universe, God and ourselves is mainly controlled by images.<sup>38</sup> This is also true in a person's conception of heaven, which is usually based on a series of powerful metaphors, where images such as that of a garden, taken from the world around us, are turned into "windows of perception into spiritual truths". These

<sup>36</sup> Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings*, 66.

<sup>37</sup> Maria Laach Abbey, Germany. Photo courtesy of <http://www.sacred-destinations.com>, accessed 22 February 2009.

<sup>38</sup> McGrath, *A Brief History of Heaven*, 2-4.

images become the doors by which the mind enters a reality that lies beyond the physical world, a reality that can offer salvation.<sup>39</sup>

To see God; to see heaven. From a Christian perspective, the horizons defined by the parameters of our human existence merely limit what we can see; they do not define what there is to be seen, imprisoned by its history and mortality, humanity has had to content itself with pressing its boundaries to their absolute limits, longing to know what lies beyond them. Can we break through the limits of time and space, and glimpse another realm – another dimension, hidden from us at present, yet which one day we shall encounter, and even enter?<sup>40</sup>

The cloister and more specifically the cloister garden, through its varied metaphorical connotations, became part of the salvation history of Christianity. Moreover, the enclosed garden becomes a virtual portal into a divine world, when it, as in-between space, crosses over boundaries, linking the three prominent gardens found in the Bible, the Garden of Eden, the Song of Songs and the Garden of Paradise, in one single historical continuum.

Discussing the enclosed garden in its role of representational space it has been argued that the enclosed garden binds a person in space, offering a reality to her existence while simultaneously offering a way to escape this bounded fixity. The garden becomes part of man's organization of space, part of his realization that he has a place in the universe and that his destiny depends on his occupation and taking part in it. Gerardus van der Leeuw claims that man out of his own particular environment constructs a world for himself which he believes himself able to dominate. "Accordingly, man does not conduct himself "objectively" towards the world: he participates in it, just as it does in him. His path to the world is neither that

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<sup>39</sup> For a detailed history of Heaven refer to Colleen McDannell and Bernard Lang, *Heaven: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); McGrath, *A Brief History of Heaven*; Jeffrey Burton Russell, *A History of Heaven: The Singing Silence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).

<sup>40</sup> McGrath, *A Brief History of Heaven*, 1-2.

of contemplation, nor reflection, nor presenting himself as a subject and so forming a “substratum”, but of existing as oriented *towards* the world. Man’s domination of the world is thus a domination exerted always from within”.<sup>41</sup> Man’s fate, therefore, depends not on any temporal economy but on a compartmentalization of space, the division of the cosmos into zones that are governed by particular potencies.

What is involved is a reciprocal relationship between man and scene that is not merely an operation of one fixed entity on another, but a mutual coming to birth. Or, in the words of a modern psychologist, man seeks to “make a world in which to find a place to discover a self”.<sup>42</sup>

In the Christian tradition, that place was always assumed as Eden.<sup>43</sup> According to Comito, writers concerned with the traditions of monastic thought, conceived a “whole economy of salvation in terms of man’s return to this *locus voluptatis* (Genesis 2:10)”.<sup>44</sup> This idea turns out to be more than only a conflation of the rhetorical trope of *locus amoenus*, but “pleasure’s own place, the place where man can achieve that fruition which constitutes the true pleasure”. In accordance, Paul Meyvaert claims that the monks of the Middle Ages were familiar with the Bible and that paradise for them was in the first place the Garden of Eden, a “*paradisus voluptatis*”, the most beautiful of earthly gardens which were planted by God Himself and from which Adam and Eve were exiled after the fall.<sup>45</sup> Man, since then, have always been yearning after his own “true homeland, the seat of his being”, while

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<sup>41</sup> Gerardus van der Leeuw, trans. J.E. Turner, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation: A Study in Phenomenology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 543.

<sup>42</sup> Edith Cobb, “The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood,” in *Daedalus*, LXXXVIII (1959), 540, quoted in Comito, *The Idea of the Garden in the Renaissance*, 32.

<sup>43</sup> See also Achva Benzinberg Stein, “Thoughts occasioned by the Old Testament” in Mark Francis and Randolph T. Hester, Jr. eds., *The Meaning of Gardens* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990), 38-45, especially interesting is the etymological discussion of the word Eden. Eden becomes not only a place that is irrigated and blessed with water but also encompasses the joy of becoming more refined and attuned.

<sup>44</sup> Comito, *The Idea of the Garden in the Renaissance*, 32.

<sup>45</sup> Meyvaert, “The Medieval Monastic Garden,” 50.

spending his life in a “Babylonian captivity”, a never ending exile in an alien land.<sup>46</sup>

The Christian writer, Anselm Stoltz describes this exile as follows:

After the first parent of the human race had been exiled from the joys of paradise through his own fault, he entered into the bitterness of this darkness and exile which we suffer. Having departed from himself by sin, he could no longer behold the joys of the heavenly fatherland which he had contemplated hitherto. In paradise man had been wont to enjoy the works of God and the company of the blessed angels in purity of heart and lofty contemplation. After his fall he withdrew from the spiritual light with which he had been filled. We are born of the flesh of this man in the darkness of this exile; we have heard that there is a heavenly fatherland, that the spirits of the just and perfect associate with the angels.<sup>47</sup>

The language of Scripture, however, also talks of another place, a place promised by Jesus on the cross to the repentant thief, an abode of the just.<sup>48</sup> This is a secret place, found in God’s secret region, a *Hortus Dei*, a place apart, just as the enclosed garden is a place set apart, its wall a protection against the exposed.<sup>49</sup> Comito claims that the revelation of the Divine and man’s natural place is both *terra beata*, a blessed land, and *tera vera*, the true one.<sup>50</sup> The enclosed garden and ultimately the cloister became a model of this abstract space, and as Cassidy-Welch claims: “In this way, we might see that the cloister is a space in which a finite locality is connected to a theology of the infinite. Within the cloister, spaces of theological abstraction have been anchored to the earth.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Comito, *The Idea of the Garden in the Renaissance*, 32.

<sup>47</sup> Anselm Stoltz, *The Doctrine of Spiritual Perfection*, introduction Stephen Fields (New York: Crossroad, 1936), 102.

<sup>48</sup> Meyvaert, “The Medieval Monastic Garden,” 51. See. McGrath, *A Brief History of Heaven*, 43-59, for a detailed discussion of Paradise in the Bible. Jean Delumeau, *History of Paradise: The Garden of Eden in Myth and Tradition*, trans. Matthew O’Connell (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), explores the idea of paradise on earth and its influence on culture.

<sup>49</sup> See also the previous chapter on the enclosed garden and sacred space where reference is made to Mircea Eliade’s definition of sacred space as that which is set apart from profane space. This idea will again be touched upon later in this chapter.

<sup>50</sup> Comito, *The Idea of the Garden in the Renaissance*, 32.

<sup>51</sup> Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings*, 69.

The infinite nature of an eschatological space was also taken up by the imagination, drawing a picture of a “realm that represents not an undoing of creation but on the contrary a fulfillment of its original promise. Paradise is the place where the earth, “contained and enclosed... surrounded and confined” by the true heaven, becomes the “safe and most sure abode of “the end of all things.”<sup>52</sup> In this true paradise man will again regain familiarity with God and death will be eliminated. For humanity on its journey to this “promised land” it has to submit to the law of God and its end rewards would be a definite possession, in the eschatological paradise, of the blessings it had in the Garden of Eden.<sup>53</sup>

All this will enable him to peer through the keyhole, to look through the lattices and in sweet regard to follow the trail of that guiding ray, seeking light by the light, like some eager imitator of wise men. He shall then discover the place of the wonderful tabernacle, where man shall eat the bread of angels; he shall discover the paradise of pleasure planted by the Lord; he shall discover a flowering and thoroughly lovely garden; he shall discover a place of refreshment and he shall exclaim: “Oh! If only this wretched will of mine would heed my voice that she might come here and visit this place.”<sup>54</sup>

This earthly life, however, is only an in between or temporary phase, between that of a paradise lost and the promise of a new paradise. St Gregory of Nyssa explained that human nature must live in both worlds, sharing in the sorrow as well as the joy. “Since there are two spheres of life, and life is considered in a double way, according to the diversity of these two spheres, thus there is also a twofold joy, the one belonging to this life, the other to the life that is presented to our hope. Therefore, we should think it blessed to reserve our share of joy for the truly good things in eternal

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<sup>52</sup> Comito, *The Idea of the Garden in the Renaissance*, 36. Origen, *On First Principles*, G.W. Butterworth, ed. (New York, 1966), 89-94, quoted in Comito, *The Idea of the Garden in the Renaissance*, 36.

<sup>53</sup> Delumeau, *History of Paradise*, 6.

<sup>54</sup> St. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Honey and Salt: Selected Spiritual Writings of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux*, John F. Thornton and Susan B. Varenne, eds. preface Thomas Merton (New York: Vintage Spiritual Classics, 2007), 272, 24.

life and to fulfill the duty of sorrow in this short and transitory life”.<sup>55</sup> Paradise as the Garden of Eden was lost because of man’s disobedience to God and this led to death. Man was driven out of the garden because of his sins, in the words of St Gregory of Nyssa:

What was exalted has been brought low, and what was made in the image of Heaven has been reduced to the earth. What was meant to rule has been enslaved, and what had been created for immortality has been destroyed by death. Man, who once lived in the delights of Paradise, has been transplanted into this unhealthy and wearisome place, where his life, once accustomed to impassibility, became instead subject to passion and corruption.

Therefore, obedience to God’s command is necessary to gain immortality, to regain the happiness once lost, but for the monk in the cloister, cut off from the rest of the world, happiness can still be found on earth.<sup>56</sup> Through this merging of happiness and immortality to an ideal place, the topos or motif of a Utopian ideal linked to an eschatological promise, developed.<sup>57</sup> In God’s physical and metaphysical world, the utopian garden of the cloister becomes the ideal place.

As Fiona Griffiths points out, the *hortus conclusus* offered a contemporary image that could be read in the present tense.<sup>58</sup> The Garden of Eden signified humankind’s past, its fall from grace, expulsion from the garden and separation from God. The Garden of Paradise symbolized the potential for future reconciliation with God at the end of time. The *hortus conclusus* suggested the possibility for a spiritual unity of

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<sup>55</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, “The Beatitudes,” in *Ancient Christian Writers*, trans. Hilda C. Graef (New York: Paulist Press, 1954), 113-116.

<sup>56</sup> Delumeau, *History of Paradise*, 5, 122.

<sup>57</sup> John Dixon Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture*. (London: The MIT Press, 1992), 311-313, claims that utopias “imaginatively recall of perfect worlds now lost with an essential element of the impossible”. They are paradoxical because as in both gardens and utopias, their timelessness within time and their naturalness is the work of human art and craft. The word utopia etymologically derives from a combination of the Greek for “good place” and for “no place”.

<sup>58</sup> Fiona J. Griffiths, *The Garden Of Delights: Reform and Renaissance for Women in the Twelfth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 138.



God in the present, here on earth, not only in “humanity”s sinful past or glorious future”.

Cassidy-Welch describes this confinement within monastery as a journey of ascension and salvation towards God. Paradoxically, the monk can only transcend all that is earthly when he “first locates himself in a specific and confined place, the monastery.”<sup>59</sup> It is in this metaphorical *diblit*-ian space of the cloister, as enclosed garden, that man becomes free while being bounded by place.

The Garden of Eden becomes a deeply evocative space, located between heaven and earth. The banishment of Adam split human destiny in two, as it simultaneously split the garden into a past garden and a future garden. By means of the Rabbinical literature and later mystical writings the value of the garden as universal symbol of the center of all human beings were asserted. The image of garden was linked to the Adamic tale and entrance into the garden became to symbolize the human possibility of reaching the ultimate garden. Banishment from the garden is only temporary and return to this garden can be achieved here on earth by a sacramental participation in God”s church. The church and the garden become the center, the meeting point, a closed and protected community. It is an Edenic community seeking to recover the values of paradise within its own bounds.<sup>60</sup> Such a privileged vantage point of the center will then permit a full understanding of the complexity of reality as well as enabling man to shape his own truth, a life saved.

You must not suppose this paradise of inner pleasure is some material place: you enter this garden not on foot, but by deeply felt affections. You will be enchanted

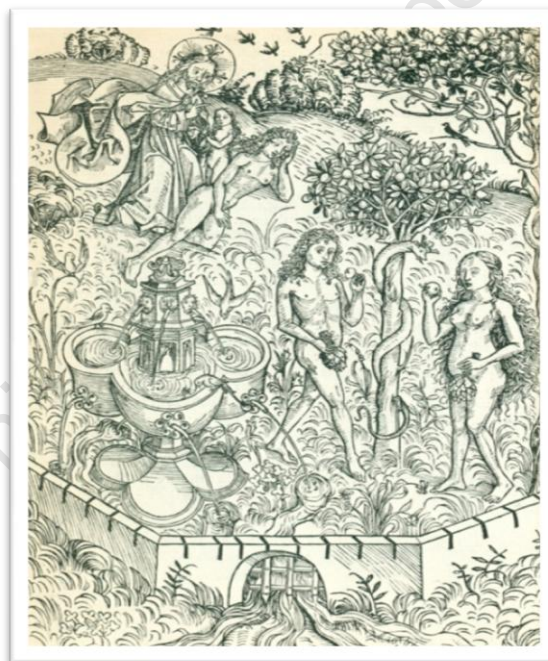
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<sup>59</sup> Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings*, 69.

<sup>60</sup> McGrath, *A Brief History of Heaven*, 67; Giulio Busi Eden, “Mystical Architecture,” in *The Earthly Paradise: The Garden of Eden from Antiquity to Modernity*, F. R. Psaki, ed. (Binghamton: Global, 2002), 15-22.

not by a copse of earthly trees, but by gracious and seemly beds of spiritual virtues. A garden enclosed, where the sealed fountain flows out into four streams, and from this single vein of wisdom flows fourfold virtue.<sup>61</sup>

Thus, the Garden of Eden, as *hortus conclusus*, is the space in which the relationship between God, humans and the world comes into being. Stefano Levi Della Torre refers to it as the locus of a splitting and of doubling, a crossroad and a choice. “Binary oppositions – day/night, wet/dry, high/low – are the imprinting in/of creation and eventually flow into the distinction between life and death and good and evil, to then flow back to the Creator Himself and His behavior and the creation impacts on Him”.<sup>62</sup> The garden, as well as Adam, is God’s creation and while Adam was placed in the garden to look after it, because of sin he was thrown out of it.



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For the new Adam the church becomes a paradise garden in this world, not only does it offers the means of restoring the lost values of Eden to the world, but it also

<sup>61</sup> St. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Honey and Salt*, 275, 25.

<sup>62</sup> Stefano Levi Della Torre, “The Anxiety of Eden,” in *The Earthly Paradise*, F. R. Psaki, ed., 5-14.

<sup>63</sup> The Huntington Kitto Bible (1836). Vol. II, fol. 250, in Stewart, *The Enclosed Garden: The Tradition and the Image in Seventeenth-Century Poetry* (London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), Figure 39.

becomes a gateway to the new paradise found in the Hereafter. In its enclosed space it brought the beauty of heaven within reach of the believers, allowing a person to step into another world and savor its delights. The church not only guarantees, but also provides a visualization of the hope of heaven.

Where then was the first man placed? In paradise certainly, as the Scripture declares “And God planted a garden [paradisum] eastward in Eden, and there He placed man whom He had formed. And then afterwards when [man] proved disobedient, he was cast out thence into this world... For the Church has been planted as a garden (paradisus) in this world; therefore says the Spirit of God, “Thou mayest freely eat from every tree of the garden”.<sup>64</sup>



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From this typology developed an image of the Church as the earthly Paradise, where the redeemed had access to Christ and therefore to knowledge of that which lies outside of time. The Tree of Life could be experienced in the here and now and it

<sup>64</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, V5 (Whitefish: Kessinger), 15, 47.

<sup>65</sup> God introduces Adam and Eve into the garden, Ludolphus of Saxonia, *Leven Jhesu Christ*, 1503. In John Prest, *The Garden of Eden: The Botanic Garden and the Re-Creation of Paradise* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 10.

provided the opportunity of a new life, to live the *vita beata*.<sup>66</sup> As Augustine, in the *The City of God* wrote:

Thus Paradise is the Church, as it is called in the Canticles; the four rivers of Paradise are the four gospels; the fruit-trees the saints, and their fruit their works; the tree of life is the holy of holies, Christ; the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the will's free choice.<sup>67</sup>

This typological point of view became easily transposed onto the monastery, which as St Bernard promised, became the "wages paid for military service; they have nothing to with the future promise made to the church but concern rather her present due. This is the hundred fold tendered already in this world to those who scorn the world".<sup>68</sup>

However, not only was the cloister a symbol of paradise here on earth, but monasticism also perceived itself as a return to Paradise, a Paradise that lies beyond the here and now of history. "Paradise then, takes the form, for historical existence, of something that has been lost and something that is before us, an object of nostalgia, of sighs, and of Streben".<sup>69</sup> It becomes a door by which those in the monastery can enter the new paradise, while being part of a paradise on earth. "At the gate of paradise a voice is heard whispering an utterly sacred and secret plan which is hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed to the little ones. The sound of this voice reason now not only grasps, but happily transmits to the will. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied".<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Meyvaert, "The Medieval Monastic Garden," 51.

<sup>67</sup> Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, introduction Thomas Merton, 1950 (New York: Modern Library, 2000), 431.

<sup>68</sup> St Bernard of Clairvaux, *Honey and Salt*, 274.

<sup>69</sup> Pier Cesare Bori, "Introduction," in *The Earthly Paradise*, F. R. Psaki, ed., 1-4.

<sup>70</sup> St Bernard of Clairvaux, *Honey and Salt*, 275.

The cloister, as enclosed garden, according to McGrath, offered a powerful visual means of depicting the location of heaven which the medieval mindset found entirely plausible.<sup>71</sup> This walled, or claustral garden, a garden of architectural forms proved satisfactory, seeing that instead of reminding of a lost Eden, it anticipated and celebrated the arrival of a new world.<sup>72</sup>

The monastery bears the image of Paradise, and an even more secure Paradise than Eden. In this lovely garden the source of the water is the baptismal font, the Tree of Life in this paradise is the body of the Lord. The various kinds of fruit trees are the different books of the Bible. As a hidden, secret place this cloister bears the image of Heaven, in which the just are segregated from the sinners just as those who profess the religious life are separated in the cloister from secular persons. Monasteries, moreover, foreshadow the heavenly Paradise.<sup>73</sup>

Just as the monastery becomes a haven of peace against the temptations found in the profane world, the enclosed garden of the inner cloister becomes, metaphorically, a corner of paradise, a *paradisus claustris*, contained and transcendent.<sup>74</sup> The monastery develops, literally and figuratively, into a compelling symbol for paradise, combining within itself not only the paradise lost but also the paradise still to be gained. It happens to be, just as in the garden of the past or in the future garden of paradise, a place where God can be encountered.

In the natural world the garden walls protect the plants from destruction by natural forces but, as part of nature, they are still subject to decay. Therefore, there is nothing more certain that natural man will also suffer the decimation of time,

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<sup>71</sup> McGrath, *A Brief History of Heaven*, 57.

<sup>72</sup> Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque*, 332.

<sup>73</sup> Honorius Augustodunensis, *Gemma anima*, I, chap. 149, quoted by Meyvaert, "The Medieval Monastic Garden," 51.

<sup>74</sup> Comito, *The Idea of the Garden in the Renaissance*, 43-44, explains that the phrase *paradisus claustralis* is itself punningly confusing the physical cloisters with the whole monastic regiment, thus the cloister garden is pre-imminently the monastic place. It is the means of communicating between different buildings and the center of the monk's daily activities. Thus the monks have discovered an image of their own place in the scheme of their salvation.

however, within the cloister walls man's soul, made in the likeness of God, can be protected. These walls offer a space set apart, where the monk can study and contemplate without being contaminated by an evil world, an uncompromising, safe space for spiritual growth and salvation. It becomes the Paradise in which God himself take pleasure and whose walls would prevail against the onslaughts of time.

Symbolically the garden wall removes Christ's church from the "physical necessities of the world. It shadowed forth the contrast between the two Adams in man: one born under the Curse and living under the pressures of the moment, only to die at last as had his original predecessor; the second born by the Grace of God, of the spirit into the prospect of eternal Life."<sup>75</sup>

In the monastery the monk could encounter the hortus conclusus physically, as well as metaphorically, whether that garden was a symbol of the soul, church or purity of virginity.<sup>76</sup> For, as written in the Song of Songs: "An enclosed garden is my sister, my bride, a hidden well, a sealed spring", it is the ultimate site for spiritual and symbolic enactment.<sup>77</sup> As Meyvaert so clearly points out, "the very architectural layout of the cloister could be exploited, through symbolic interpretation; to explain what monastic life was all about...The cloister is the symbol of a spiritual ideal.....it still remains witness to the fact that the themes of spiritual freedom and physical limitation are ultimate themes".<sup>78</sup>

This becomes very clear in Cassidy-Welch's discussion of eschatological space in Cistercian theological discourse. In the narratives discussed the cloister is not only

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<sup>75</sup> Stewart, *The Enclosed Garden*, 51.

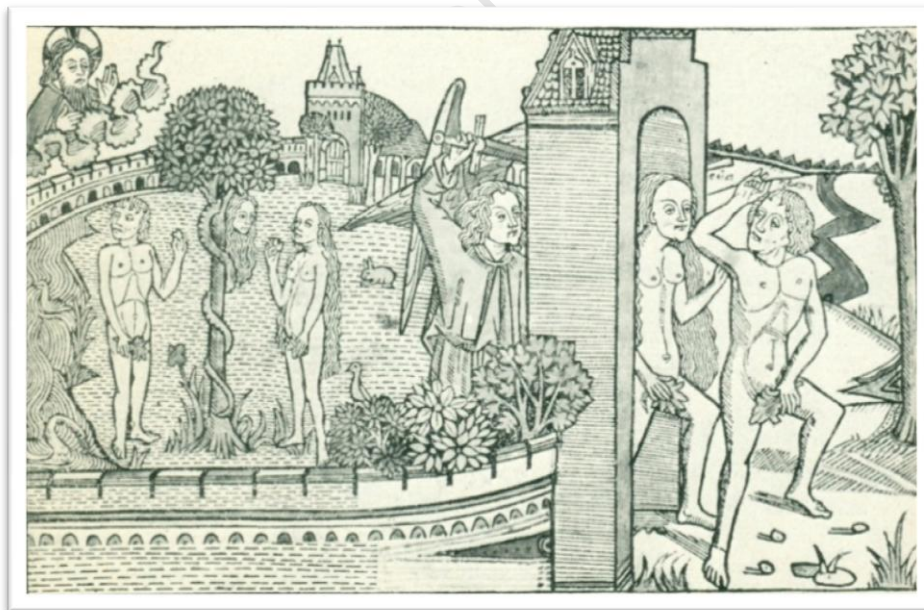
<sup>76</sup> Griffiths, *The Garden Of Delights*, 138.

<sup>77</sup> Chana Bloch and Ariel Bloch, eds., *The Song of Songs*, foreword S. Mitchell, afterword R. Alter (New York: The Modern Library, 2006), 4:12. For the medieval cloister as mirroring Solomon's Portico, see Wayne Dynes, "The Medieval Cloister as Portico of Solomon," *Gesta*, 12, 1/2 (1973): 61-69.

<sup>78</sup> Meyvaert, "The Medieval Monastic Claustum," 58.

the topographical site for witnessing the unexpected, but it is also the site in which the distinction between the otherworldly and the earthly is confused. Within the cloister the spaces of the monastery and ideas of the afterlife were frequently combined, whereby the cloister not only signified these other spaces, but paradise itself was perceived as being present in the fixed cloister site.<sup>79</sup>

Accordingly, Fiona Griffiths claims that the wall or enclosure is a crucial definition of gardens, as it is a garden's inaccessibility which becomes the source of its desirability.<sup>80</sup> Similarly, the *hortus conclusus* of the Song of Songs is private and exclusive, enclosed by a circling wall and sealed by a gate at which the lover knocks to enter.<sup>81</sup> This image of a gate can also be drawn back to the gate by which Adam and Eve had to leave the garden and through which they could not return and to the gated Heavenly city of Jerusalem at the end of time.



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<sup>79</sup> Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings*, 71.

<sup>80</sup> Griffiths, *The Garden Of Delights*, 138.

<sup>81</sup> Bloch and Bloch, eds., *The Song of Songs*, 5:2.

<sup>82</sup> The Huntington Kitto Bible (1836). Vol. II, fol. 248. in Stewart, *The Enclosed Garden*, Figure 9.

The gate is foremost there to keep a person out of the garden, but the goal of the spiritual life is to regain the garden from which humanity was barred entrance, because of sin. To enter through the gates of the monastery gives access to a spiritual garden here on earth. "Within the monastery the professed religious had achieved the closest possible earthly equivalent to the garden of paradise – the garden of the monastic cloister in which, suspended between this world and the next, she could devote herself to contemplation of God".<sup>83</sup>

This theme, of exclusivity and connected with it, virginity, becomes part of the monastic tradition and Mary as prototype of the Bride of Solomon becomes the essential symbol of both bride and chaste virgin.<sup>84</sup> Stanley Stewart claims that this individual emulation of Mary presupposes a separation of two beings in time. He continues by stating that every creature and every object must be seen in two temporal dimensions and it is specifically this temporal distinction that enriched the meaning of the enclosed garden, as the enclosed garden is the very epitome of such a liminal space.<sup>85</sup>

The qualities of Solomon's bride foreshadow the greater perfection of Mary, but also reminds of the flaws of Eve. This duality also applies to the life of man, who because of sin, is removed from the garden, but can become free of sin in the monastery enclosure in anticipation for the ultimate gift of eternal rewards. Stewart argues that this emphasis on mutual belonging is strongly reinforced by the enclosed garden. In this figure of the enclosed garden is captured the image of splendor of Solomon's Kingdom and of his Bride, which chosen by God, remains untouched, enclosed and

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<sup>83</sup> Griffiths, *The Garden Of Delights*, 138.

<sup>84</sup> See also Brain F. Daley, "'The Closed Garden' and the 'Sealed Fountain': Song of Songs 4:12 in the Late Medieval Iconography of Mary," in MacDougall, ed., *Medieval Gardening*, 253-278.

<sup>85</sup> Stewart, *The Enclosed Garden*, 33.



sealed. "Though shut from the world in both body and spirit, yet she bore fruit; her garden flourished with the flowers of a new dispensation".<sup>86</sup>

Stewart further claims that around a given text of scripture a cluster of images appeared which represented the limitations of man and the power and mercy of God. These garden allegories clearly emphasize the Christian theme of fall and redemption. "The answer to Man's Fall and Expulsion is God's entrance into the Mary-garden. Not only does this bring Mary into contrast with Eve, but implicitly man's limits are placed in contrast to God's infinite power: man loses, God creates, a Paradise".<sup>87</sup>

Keep north, you winds of death.  
Come, southern winds for lovers. Come and stir  
the garden with your breath.  
Shake fragrance on the air.  
My love will feed among the lilies there.

She enters, the bride! Closes  
the charming garden that all dreams foretold her;  
in comfort she reposes  
close to my shoulder.  
arms of the lover that she loves enfold her.<sup>88</sup>

Mary becomes the meeting place of two dispensations, she is the garden where the "manifold parts of time merged and disappeared". Within the historical continuum of Christianity's salvation history, the past, present and future become assimilated in the figure of Mary. In Mary the great circle from Paradise through history to Paradise is complete. Mary is part of the Christian plan of Redemption as her life encloses the

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<sup>86</sup> Stewart, *The Enclosed Garden*, 36-38.

<sup>87</sup> Stewart, *The Enclosed Garden*, 38.

<sup>88</sup> From the "Spiritual Canticle, Songs between the soul and the bridegroom", in John Frederick Nims, *The Poems of St John of the Cross*, original Spanish texts and English translations, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 13.

mystery of the Incarnation and “how in the life of a single human all history became one moment. Through Mary, the effects of history (the consequences of the Fall) had become undone.” The enclosed garden of the cloister, as symbol of Mary, surpasses the Garden of Eden because its walls offer protection against all evils.



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According to Stewart, there are two ways in which Mary is the enclosed garden. The first is in a literal or historical sense as she stood in history as a partition between two dispensations of time, between sin and grace and as Mother of the Church she encloses the Garden of God. Secondly she is also the wall of the Church that shields the congregation. Both her virginity and the garden wall represent the exclusiveness of the divine bride (the monastery), in addition they figure in a parallel manner, the “garden wall and the soul of the Holy Mother specifically excluded any intrusion by sin or the world”.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>89</sup> The Virgin Mary, in C.G. Jung, *Dreams*, trans. R.F.C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 146.

<sup>90</sup> Stewart, *The Enclosed Garden*, 49, 50.

On the other hand, Mary, the virgin enclosed, becomes the portal, the gate by which all men can enter to participate in the salvation of the individual soul. As St Ambrose of Milan wrote:

But what is that gate of the sanctuary, that outer gate towards the east, which remains *shut, and nobody* – the prophet – *shall pass through it, but only the God of Israel shall pass through it?* Surely this gate is Mary, the gate through which the Saviour has entered the world. This is the gate of righteousness, as he himself said: *Allow us to fulfill all righteousness.* This gate is Mary...<sup>91</sup>

Typologically, therefore, the soul's inclusion in Christ's church becomes represented by the figures of the enclosed garden and the Virgin Mary. Mary becomes the symbol of the believing church "virginal" in its relationship with the world, a fruitful mother of those born again, a virgin in an enclosed garden. The cloister, as virgin bride, becomes a garden enclosed, a paradise on earth, simultaneously womb and entry, a safeguard in the here and now and a doorway for man's soul.



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<sup>91</sup> Ambrose of Milan, *Political Letters and Speeches*, trans., introduction, notes, J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz and Carole Hill (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), Book 10, 342.

<sup>92</sup> Gate of Heaven, Stained Glass by Sarah Hall, <http://www.viarosa.com>, accessed 10 April 2009.

## The Cloister Garden: Sacred Space

Separated from his center of origin, man found himself thereafter enclosed in the temporal realm, from which he could no longer return to that unique place whence all things are contemplated under the aspect of eternity...In other words, the possession of the „sense of eternity“ is linked to...the „primordial state“, the restoration of which constitutes the first stage of true initiation...The „Terrestrial Paradise, moreover, properly represents the „Center of the World“...

...one should speak of something that is hidden rather than of something truly lost, for it is not lost to everyone, and some few still possess it in its integrality; and if such is the case, others always have the possibility of recovering it provided they search for it in the right way so that through the harmonic vibrations it awakens, according to the law of „concordant actions and reactions“ they are enabled to establish an effective spiritual communication with this supreme center. In all traditional forms, this directing of the intention is, moreover, always symbolically represented by ritual orientation; properly speaking, the latter is in fact the direction toward some spiritual center, which, no matter what the particular center it may be, is always an image of the true „Center of the World“.<sup>93</sup>



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<sup>93</sup> René Guénon, *The King of the World*, trans. Henry D. Fohr, ed. Samuel D. Fohr (Hillsdale NY: Sophia Perennis, 2001), 28-29, 50-51.

<sup>94</sup> San Damiano, Italy. Photo courtesy of <http://www.sacred-destinations.com>, accessed 22 February 2009.

Prior to discussing the cloister garden as sacred space, it is worthwhile to pay attention to Megan Cassidy-Welch's summary of the cloister in Medieval Cistercian thought. In her words:

Medieval Cistercians recognized the cloister as the **centre** of their monasteries, as an area which served to **demarcate** architecturally the principal areas of labour, liturgy, prayer and domesticity within Cistercian houses. The cloister was also a site for liturgical expressions of community. However, the cloister was also perceived as a space abundant with **symbolic meanings** and was associated in particular with the heavenly paradise. This identification of an earthly topographical site with the imagined space of heaven was primarily expressed in terms of symbolic transcendence, described in procession and literary representations of the cloister and monastery.<sup>95</sup>

Within this explanation of Cassidy-Welch, two aspects of sacred space can be recognized, that which David Chidester calls a poetics of sacred space and a politics of sacred space.<sup>96</sup> This coexistence of the poetics and politics of sacred space can also, according to Chidester, be found in Gerardus van der Leeuw's suggestion of a substantial definition of sacred "power" in spatial terms. He states that for Van der Leeuw, the "sacred could only be localized by becoming a "position", a significant, valued, even liberated place carved out of the vast extension of space".<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings*, 71. Emphasis mine.

<sup>96</sup> David Chidester and Edward Tabor Linenthal, eds., *American Sacred Space* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 6.

<sup>97</sup> David Chidester, "The Poetics and Politics of Sacred Space: Towards a Critical Phenomenology of Religion," in *From the Sacred to the Divine*, Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, ed. (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, Press, 1994), 211-232, 214. In *American Sacred Space*, 7 Chidester explains that Van der Leeuw outlined an inventory of sacred space, that have appeared in the history of religion, based on a series of homologies, through which he asserted the metaphoric equivalence of home, temple, settlement, pilgrimage site and human body. Ultimately, according to him, the pilgrimage site, whether, home, temple or sacred settlement can ultimately be found at the center of the body in the human heart. These sacred places become sacred because they can be discerned as transferable metaphors for a kind of powerful space. In addition and concurrently to these spaces, Van der Leeuw posits a second series of homologies linked to the first; hearth (home), shrine (pilgrimage site) and heart (human body), thus concluding that at the heart of each sacred place is another heart, the center of power located at the core of each sacred center. These two series of equivalence establish the basic vocabulary for the analysis of sacred places and therefore provide the key terms for sacred space.

Terry Comito in his very interesting chapter, “Sacred Space and the Image of Paradise”, gives an analysis of sacred space tracing it back to Aristotle’s theories of contained space. Space becomes essentially definable, because it has a boundary and an objective form that is intelligible to the human mind, thus, in this sense, all space is cosmic, of itself constituting an order. Drawing on Gerardus van der Leeuw, he argues that sacred space is the experience of a boundary or limit that separates it from the amorphous profane. Man has a place in the universe and his destiny depends on occupying it and taking a stand in it. The enclosed garden partakes in all these qualities and affords a reciprocal relationship between man and his environment, thus filling him with power.<sup>98</sup>

Considering the cloister garden as a liberating, but bounded sacred space, it is essential to have a closer look at the physical elements that make up the cloister garden



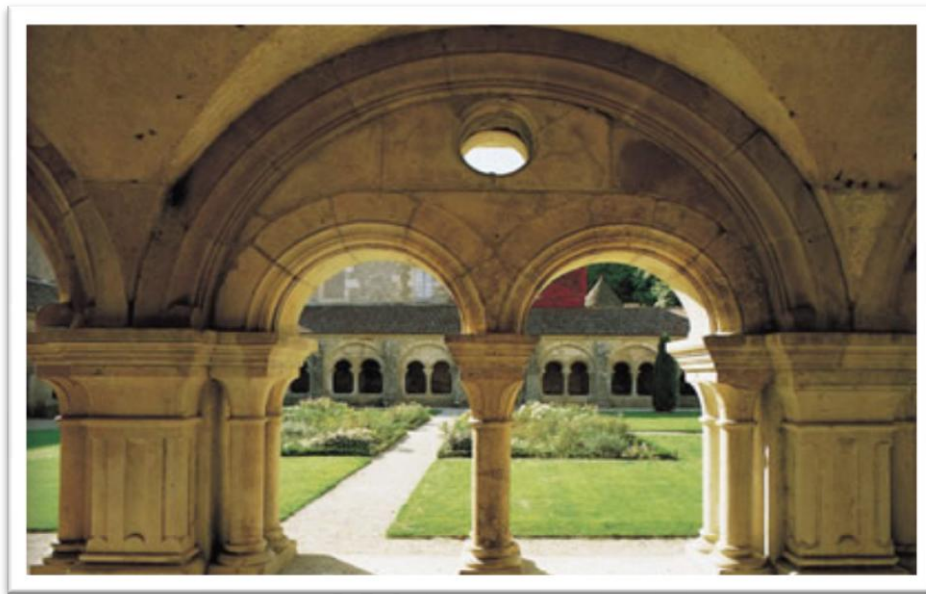
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<sup>98</sup> Comito, *The Idea of the Garden in the Renaissance*, 25-50.

<sup>99</sup> Royal Monastery of Santo Domingo de Silos, Spain, [www.bonemania.com](http://www.bonemania.com), accessed 22 February 2009.



The claustral range is constructed of several elements enclosing a central garden in the middle. Around this garden there is, typically, a lean-to canopy roof along its perimeter, which creates a walkway with a fixed wall on the outside with pillared inner supports on the inside. This walkway combines protection from the elements with simultaneous exposure to fresh air, green grass and the constant movement of daylight.



100

The green lawn in the middle can be divided into four parts around a central element which can be either a well, fountain or tree. This green garden is partially hidden by the piers of arches, which makes it difficult to see the whole garden at once as another column obstructs the view. To see it in its entirety one has to move from the protection of the covered arcade into the garden proper. This is, according to Mick Hales, the crossing of an invisible line; therefore, it seems as if the green grass is bounded by an imaginary fence. When viewed from the centre, the spatial qualities

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<sup>100</sup> Abbaye de Fontenay, France. <http://www.symboldesfrance.fr/sejour-culturel-abbaye-de-fontenay.php>, accessed 22 February 2009.

break down once the visual tension between the walkway arches and garden disappears.<sup>101</sup>

Roberta Gilchrist claims that by the eleventh century a considerable uniformity could be found in the way buildings were arranged around cloisters. Although, this model suited the agrarian economy of the monastery, its spatio-architectural form became essential to the religious economy within the monastery as well.<sup>102</sup>



103

The cloister is ordinarily placed south of the church so that the monks can reap the full benefit of the sun while busy with their prayers and reading. As it funnels daylight into the center, because of its openness to heaven, it also reminds the monks of God lightening their darkness, literally through the sun at day and the moon and stars at night and symbolically through their prayers.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Hales, *Monastic Garden*, 18. Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 54, give a very eloquent and detailed description of the architectural layout of the cloister garth and its symbolic orientation as microcosm within the macrocosm, as well as drawing attention to its link to paradise in a functional sense.

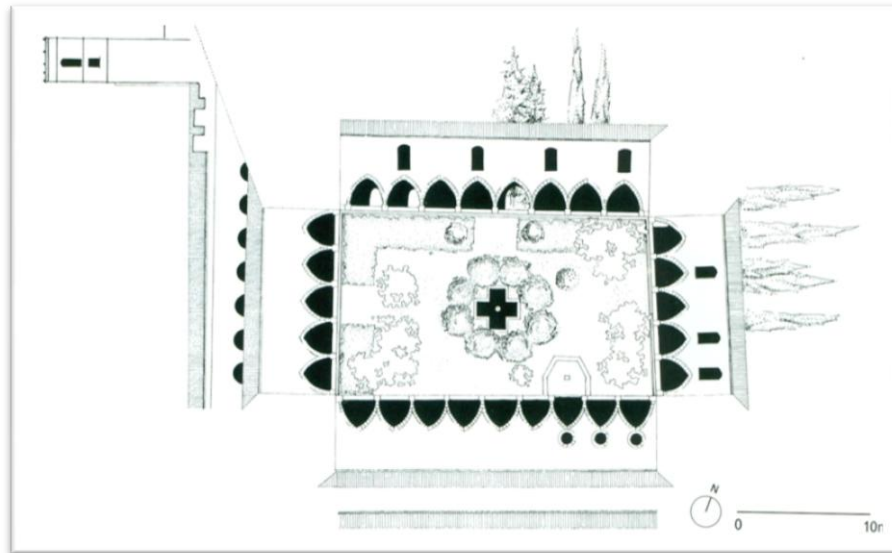
<sup>102</sup> Gilchrist *Norwich Cathedral Close*, 66.

<sup>103</sup> Abbaye de Fontenay, France. <http://www.symboldesfrance.fr/sejour-culturel-abbaye-de-fontenay.php>, accessed 22 February 2009.

<sup>104</sup> Hales, *Monastic Garden*, 21.



At its inner center is the cloister garden, a position which Comito claims, literally and symbolically orients the monks in space by supposing that the buildings radiate outward from the cloister, just as the world radiate outward from God at the center.<sup>105</sup>



106

According to Comito, the paradise of the cloister is a square space and nothing else; it is a space like the atrium Ezekiel (40:47) saw in the Heavenly Temple, inscribed in the center of the whole and it is in this space that monastic life assumes its characteristic form, and emphasizes its position as being halfway between this world and the next.<sup>107</sup> As Gerardus van der Leeuw exclaims: “When man seeks the

<sup>105</sup> Comito, *The Idea of the Garden in the Renaissance*, 47.

<sup>106</sup> Monastery of Santes Creus, Spain. Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden* 73.

<sup>107</sup> St Hildegard von Bingen quoted in Hales, *Monastic Garden*, and 22. The green grass of the square brings to the fore the unique power associated with the colour green. St Hildegard of Bingen ascribed a new meaning to the Latin word *viriditas* (greenness), assigning to it a calming and healing power when she likened its rejuvenating spiritual effect to the power of creativity. In her words: “...greening love hastens to the aid of all. With the passion of heavenly yearning, people who breathe this dew produce rich fruit.” The green of the enclosed cloister garden assimilates the qualities of the enclosed garden as a metaphorical oasis, since it becomes a place of nourishment and refreshment for the soul, pulling a person in towards an inner contemplation of the self. Landsberg, *The Medieval Garden*, 36, claims that the colour green was not only a metaphysical symbol of birth and rebirth, but that it also had psychological benefits as can seen in a quote from Hugh of Fouilloy, *De clauastro animae*, chap. 34, also quoted by Meyvaert “The Medieval Monastic Garden,” 45. “The green turf which is in the middle of the material cloister refreshes encloistered eyes and their desire to study returns. It is truly the nature of the colour green that it nourishes the eyes and preserves their vision”.

frontiers of his own being, he finds these within himself, his environment, and in the world above.”<sup>108</sup>

Processions to and from the church proceed regularly along the cloister galleries and the inner square can only be crossed on paths, which also marks its axis. The tree, fountain or well, found at this point carry deep religious significance; the tree was seen as a symbol of life and the water, a symbol of moral and sacred purification.<sup>109</sup>



110

Comito holds that dogma and feeling converged on the forms of the cloister, rendering a poetics of sacred space. He explains that monastic life is an attempt to return to paradise and is, in this, “simply an extension in history of what is achieved in the timeless moment of baptism, which from the earliest time was also thought of

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<sup>108</sup> Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, 65. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. William R. Trask (Orlando: A Harvest Book, 1959), 42-57, argues that religious man always feels the need to exist in a total and organized world, a cosmos. Thus, from an Eliadean perspective; the monk in the monastery ritually transforms space into a cosmos and gives it value through the symbolic installation of an *axis mundi*. This becomes a space where communication with the transcendent is possible, which leads to a new beginning, a new saved life. The monk, therefore, transgresses historical time in the course of ritual, by which he gains power to give meaning to life steeped in the Christian myths of life after death.

<sup>109</sup> Comito, *The Idea of the Garden in the Renaissance*, 50, draws attention to the symbolism of the fountain as water of life which symbolizes purity and virginity and a new life through Mary in Christ.

<sup>110</sup> Tarragona Cathedral, Spain. Photo courtesy of <http://www.sacred-destinations.com>, accessed 22 February 2009.

as a re-entry into Eden".<sup>111</sup> These forms symbolically represent the monk's own quest for spiritual purity in order to become part of the new paradise of God.<sup>112</sup>

The qualities of the cloister and the monk's life are connected not only metaphorically; the architecture of the cloister imposes itself on the human activity which takes place within its precincts. The cloister becomes the center of the monk's daily life outside the divine services, though always bounded to the liturgy, through the processional routes and through monastic ritual conducted at the washing place (lavatorium), at the entrance to the refectory.



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This washing of the hands and feet before and after every meal, as well as the ritual washing of feet, once a week, also enforce the idea of spiritual cleansing of the soul. By placing these washing structures within the cloister garth, ritual space becomes

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<sup>111</sup> Comito, *The Idea of the Garden in the Renaissance*, 47-48.

<sup>112</sup> See Dynes, "The Medieval Cloister as Portico of Solomon," 61, for a spiritual reading of the architecture of the cloister and its application to the monastic community.

<sup>113</sup> Abbey of Saint- Hilaire, France. Photo courtesy of <http://www.sacred-destinations.com>, accessed 22 February 2009.

bound up with monastic ideas of spiritual cleansing.<sup>114</sup> Thus, within these spaces the dichotomy between sacred and profane spaces is collapsed, as the divine could be encountered in the routine of everyday life.

Henry Lefebvre proposes that a sanctuary or monastery can be thought of as absolute space. Absolute space is by definition religious as well as political, since it can be ritually affixed to any place, it is also detachable and therefore requires identifying marks.<sup>115</sup> This orientation and demarcation of absolute space becomes part of what Chidester calls a politics of position, which recognizes the situational and relational work of positioning by which human beings have chiseled out sacred places in the world.<sup>116</sup>

Accordingly, a sacred place draws around itself boundaries and adjusts within these boundaries methods of orientation to place the individual in space. Chidester claims that this placing required the symbolic and cultural labour of orientation and limitation, which goes hand in hand with the dominant worldview of the time. It is, to use Lefebvre's term, a representation of space that combines ideology and knowledge within a specific socio-spatial structure.<sup>117</sup> In the Middle Ages representations of space were borrowed from Aristotelian and Ptolemaic conceptions, modified by Christianity. In these representations, earth is the

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<sup>114</sup> Gilchrist, *Norwich Cathedral Close*, 77, 92. See also her discussion, pg. 66-93, of the positioning of capitals which narrates scenes from the Life of Christ, Book of Revelations, Old Testament and lives of Saints, which would act as mnemonic tools and which thematic content would be reinforced during frequent movement through the cloister walks. See Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings*, 47-71 for a detailed discussion on metaphorical and material space in the Cistercian Cloister. She pays close attention to the way architectural definition is given to a liturgical event. The "transcendent meaning of the ritual was given physical form...the immediate location of the cloister, therefore, was symbolically transformed by this ritual to signify biblical and heavenly spaces".

<sup>115</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 236.

<sup>116</sup> Chidester and Linenthal, eds., *American Sacred Space*, 8-9. They also give a discussion of the politics of property and the politics of exclusion in the analysis of sacred space.

<sup>117</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 450.

“underground „world” and the luminous Cosmos, Heaven of the just and of the angels, inhabited by God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. A fixed sphere within a finite space, diametrically bisected by the surface of the Earth, below this surface, the fires of Hell; above it in the upper half of the sphere, the Firmament – a cupola bearing the fixed stars and circling planes – and a space criss-crossed by divine messages and messengers filled by the radiant glory of the Trinity”.



118

Barrow and Le Goff argue that the people of the Middle Ages came into contact with physical reality by way of mystical and pseudoscientific abstractions. Nature was composed of four elements which made up the universe in which man became the microcosm. This single vision of the universe was shared by all and by means of a fairly elaborate Christianization of old symbols and pagan myths, the forces of nature was personified in a single cosmography.<sup>119</sup> The four rivers of Paradise, the four

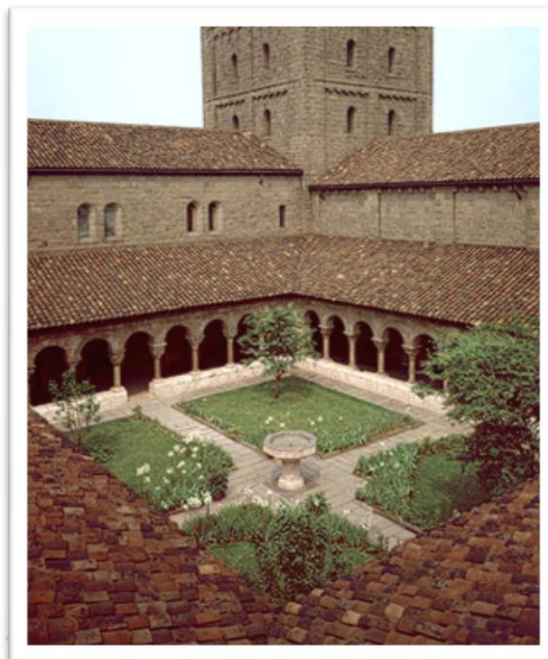
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<sup>118</sup> Fountains Abbey, North Yorkshire, Britain. Photo courtesy of <http://www.sacred-destinations.com>, accessed 22 February 2009.

<sup>119</sup> Jacques Le Goff and Julia Barrow, *Medieval Civilization: 400 -1500* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 138. Here they give a detailed discussion on cosmography and paradise in Medieval Thought. See also Yi-Fu Tuan, *Passing Strange and Wonderful, Nature and Culture*. (Washington, D.C.: A Shearwater Book, 1993), 136-142, for medieval ideas about the upper world. People expected to find, upon dying and entering heaven, a reality with which they were already familiar.



winds and four compass points built upon a model of the four elements, which interjected their image between natural realities and human perception. The geographical horizon became a spiritual horizon, a Christian reality. It was also in terms of this reality that people defined the rest of humanity and whereby a person placed himself in relation to others. This worldview went hand in hand with the idea of mission and Christianity closed itself off to only the select few who accepted the faith.<sup>120</sup>



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In accordance, Aben and De Wit claim that Christianity had a dualistic position on nature.<sup>122</sup> Nature was deemed chaotic with no system and to them it represented the aftermath of the fall, while the cyclic motion of the heavenly bodies referred to the perfect and original creation. Therefore, their aesthetic conception of nature was to control and create order in the chaos.

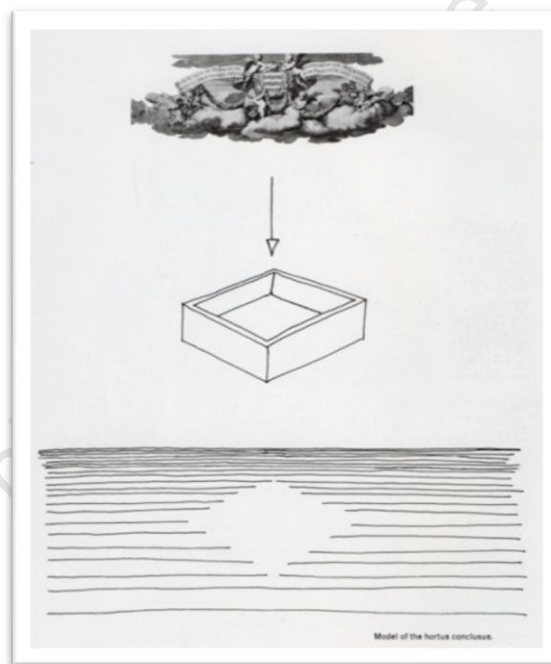
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<sup>120</sup> See also Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, 259, for his discussion of the monastic community where “powerfulness, not to be acquired in the “world” is realized.”

<sup>121</sup> Abbey of Saint-Michel-de-Cuxa, France. [www.metmuseum.org](http://www.metmuseum.org), accessed 22 February 2009.

<sup>122</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 38, 52.

Representational spaces, according to Lefebvre, interpreted these representations of cosmological representations in the foci of vicinity such as the monastery. Just as the world of the Middle Ages was a world closed and shut off on the earth below, but open to the heaven above, the cloister became shut off and isolated from the rest of the world.<sup>123</sup> As representational space the cloister found its typology in the *Hortus Contemplationus*, whose perfection or integrity could be found in the spatial completeness of the cloister garth. The *Hortus Contemplationus*, or garden of reflection, depicted a hierarchical Universe with God at its centre. The physical garden was a space surrounded by a gallery, with the sky as its ceiling and the rest of the monastery buildings surrounding it.



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The *Hortus Contemplationus*, therefore, is an abstraction of space whereby the “unfathomableness of space” is made understandable by experiencing it from a point at the center. Symbolically the cloister created, within its precinct, a bounded space,

<sup>123</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 45.

<sup>124</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 59.

by which physical presence is given to the concept of the monastic enclosure, “space and representation are the same”.

The hortus contemplationis is sealed off from imperfect nature and invites a search for the invisible, underlying beauty, the perfect nature as God intended. It is a reflection of this divine order: a spatially complete unity with harmonious proportions and symbolic references. This shutting out of the everyday world is resolutely achieved by the surrounding world, within whose confines symbolism is uppermost.<sup>125</sup>

Gilchrist concludes that the word cloister, which derived from the Latin *claustrum*, means enclosure, barrier, bolt or gate and that the term conveys the inward-looking nature of monastic life.<sup>126</sup> The cloister garth, therefore, is a void penetrating the compact mass of monastic buildings, as the walls of the garden is the building and the walls of the building is the gallery of the garden. There is, as a result, an unmistakable confluence of place and space within the organization of the larger assembly and this becomes an important element of the enclosed garden’s spatial characteristics.

Its finite space is a rendition of the infinite space of nature: the horizontal plane of the earth, fixed in the cruciform system of coordinates with which space can be measured, and above it the heavenly vault. The sky is the ceiling, framed by the roof of the gallery. The earth’s surface is depicted by a measurable plane, linked to the sky by the *axis mundi* or model of *existential space*...This vertical orientation illustrates the sacred aspect of architectural space and the horizontal the profane.<sup>127</sup>

The enclosed garden of the cloister, metaphorically, represented the Garden of Eden and Paradise; physically, the layout of the garden reflected the perfection of the Divine by means of a geometrical cosmogram. This view was enforced by the ideas

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<sup>125</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 59.

<sup>126</sup> Gilchrist, *Norwich Cathedral Close*, 241.

<sup>127</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 52.



of Plotinus and Augustine, who promoted symbolic art as glorifying the unseen order of the splendid universe.<sup>128</sup> In this hierarchical structure with God at the head, everything in the visible world was believed to be formed in an image of the eternal Form leading to the medieval enthusiasm for symbols.



129

The key aesthetic concepts were order, equality, unity, number and proportion which held forth, that formal and symmetrical design shared in the formal characteristics of universal forms. A good design becomes the microcosm of the macrocosm and underlined a sacred geometry of architecture. The cloister garden, in a sense was an embodiment of the Platonic Forms and its design was based on mathematical symbolism. The cloister square manifested the relationship between man and God, it became a symbol of the great mystery of God, His invincible presence at the heart of the monastery.

The *cosmogram* formalizes the relationship between heaven and earth imbuing the garden with a cosmic orientation. The spatial component and the notion of

<sup>128</sup> See Turner, *Garden History*, 110-111 for a discussion of Plotinus and his equation of the Good with a supreme being which could be mystically sensed but not directly known.

<sup>129</sup> Abbey of Cluny, France. Photo courtesy of <http://www.sacred-destinations.com>, accessed 22 February 2009.

„geometric harmony“ as a reflection of the divine converge, determined by the idea of God as architect of the universe (elegans architectus) who has provided absolute rules.<sup>130</sup>

Sandra Hamilton and Andre Spicer call this orientation the architectural control of space.<sup>131</sup> This control played an important role in dividing sacred and profane space in the monastery and symbolically directing an individual's thoughts towards the eschatological. Within the monastery the center and stricter enclosure of the cloister garth emphasized not only the liminal quality of the space, where earthly and heavenly might combine and co-exist; it also becomes part of the manipulated spatial geography of the monastery.

The monastery was a system of open courts which were open to the secular community, but the inner cloister and its cloister garth were only accessible to the religious residents of the monastery. This controlled the level of contact between the people, not only between secular and Christian, but also between different social levels, religious status and most importantly members of the opposite sex. This restriction of access to certain locations within the monastery precinct contributed to the establishment of sacred space. Within the monastery spatial boundaries were delineated and it outlined a hierarchy of space by which the inner cloister garth became the most sacred location.

Chidester affirms that by means of this exclusion that which is sacred is placed within boundaries. Through practices of exclusion it stands out from the surrounding entirety of space and becomes a place isolated from the rest of the world. Sacred space, according to Van der Leeuw, is a space in which relations among persons

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<sup>130</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 53; Beswick, *Shoots out of Eden*, 31; Turner, *Garden History*, 112-114.

<sup>131</sup> Sandra Hamilton and Andrew Spicer, *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 140-141.

could be negotiated and worked out. In this place certain people were left out, kept out and forced out while the sanctity inside was certified by maintaining and reinforcing its boundaries.<sup>132</sup>



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The architectural space of the cloister reinforced both cosmological beliefs and social values. Access to certain places or exclusion from them recognizes a politics of positioning of sacred space, as these divisions are drawn according to age, social status, gender and religious identity, which leads to a strict hierarchal environment. Gilchrist claims that the monastic enclosure constructs space, defines boundaries and prohibits ingress.<sup>134</sup> These boundaries come to represent both the monastery's own jurisdiction and the limits of the sacred.

<sup>132</sup> David Chidester, "The Poetics and Politics of Sacred Space: Towards a Critical Phenomenology of Religion," in *From the Sacred to the Divine*, Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, ed. (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Press, 1994), 217 and in *American Sacred Space*, 8. See also Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 234-241, he claims that absolute space, its mystery and sacred character comes about through wrenching it out of its natural context, ascribing to it the spatial qualities of inside/outside, center/ periphery and making the subject to rites of prohibition and protection.

<sup>133</sup> San Damiano, Italy. [www.wikimedia.org](http://www.wikimedia.org), accessed 22 February 2209.

<sup>134</sup> Gilchrist, *Norwich Cathedral Close*, 240-241.

In keeping with the Christian worldview the enclosed sacred space enforced a concept of immunity, protecting the monk from the contamination of the outside world.<sup>135</sup> Its boundaries guarded its purity and kept out those who were deemed unfit to enter. She also points out that in a Benedictine monastery it was usually women who were believed contaminated and from whom the monks needed protection, especially against spiritual pollution.<sup>136</sup>

The enclosed garden of the monastic cloister, the *hortus contemplationis*, becomes sacred space through its ultimate conquest of space. It is, as Lefebvre would argue, a site circumscribed and demarcated by a perimeter and characterized by symbolic and meaningful forms. In its production of sacred space<sup>137</sup> it allows for the metaphorical transcendence of the earthly world through the performance of liturgical ritual and processions, while its spatial orientation provides a model for the representation of the monastery as paradise. The cloister becomes a space in which a “finite locality is connected to a theology of the infinite. Within the cloister, spaces of theological abstraction have been anchored to the earth”.<sup>138</sup>

Thus, the enclosed cloister garden as sacred space provides a view of the world focused on an eschatological landscape, while concurrently establishing definite parameters for man to exist within the boundaries of the here and now. From an enclosed center a complete discipline of salvation emerges. The inner cloister

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<sup>135</sup> Dynes, “The Medieval Cloister as Portico of Solomon,” 61 states that according to the imagery used by Honorius, the “enclosed quality of the cloister is a figure of heaven. Just as the blessed are separated from the sinners, so those who have chosen the religious life are segregated from the worldly”, but in the cloister each person has his own place just as there is many mansions in Heaven, their “occupants being assigned according to merit”.

<sup>136</sup> See Virginia Chieffo Roguin and Sarah Stanbury, *Women’s Space: Patronage, Place and Gender in the Medieval Church* (Albany: State University of New York, 2005), especially chapter 7, 185-206 on how sacred space was seen as a type of “privileged, efficacious space” set apart and subject to pollution, especially that of women.

<sup>137</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 240. See Chidester and Linenthal, eds., *American Sacred Space*, 9-13, for a discussion on the production of sacred space.

<sup>138</sup> Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings*, 69.

provides the ultimate space for the ritual production of a meaningful religious epistemology of personal renewal, while within the center of this sacred space, architectural forms focuses the mind on the link between the cloister and the paradise of God. The cloister garden pulls together various aspects of sacred space, but it is as liminal space that it becomes a proleptic eschatological landscape outside of time, as it bounds (give life in the present) and sets free (salvation after death), simultaneously.



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<sup>139</sup> Abbey of Royaumont, France. Photo courtesy of <http://www.sacred-destinations.com>, accessed 22 February 2009.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## The Monastic Garden: A Locus for Experience

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The many great gardens of the world, of literature and poetry, of painting and music, of religion and architecture, all make the point as clear as possible: The soul cannot thrive in the absence of a garden. If you don't want paradise, you are not human; and if you are not human, you don't have a soul.<sup>1</sup>

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I believe there is something of the divine mystery in everything that exists. We can see it sparkle in a sunflower or a poppy. We sense more of the unfathomable mystery in a butterfly that flutters from a twig--or in a goldfish swimming in a bowl. But we are closest to God in our own soul. Only there can we become one with the greatest mystery of life. In truth, at very rare moments we can experience that we ourselves are that divine mystery.<sup>2</sup>

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Realizing that spirit, recognizing my own inner consciousness, the psyche so clearly, I cannot understand time. It is eternity now. I am in the midst of it. It is about me in the sunshine; I am in it, as the butterfly floats in the light-laden air. Nothing has to come; it is now. Now is eternity; now is the immortal life. Here this moment, by this tumult, on earth, now; I exist in it...To the soul there is no past and no future; all is and will ever be, in now.<sup>3</sup>

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For eternity and always there is only one now, one and the same now; the present is the only thing that has no end.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Moore, *The Re-Enchantment of Everyday Life* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1996), 101.

<sup>2</sup> Jostein Gaarder, *Sophie's World Sophie's world: A Novel about the History of Philosophy*, trans. Paulette Møller (New York: Berkley, 1996), 299.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Jefferies, *The Story of My Heart*, introduction Jeremy Hooker, 2002, preface C.J. Longman (New Delhi: The Viveka Foundation, 2003), 39.

<sup>4</sup> Erwin Scroedinger, "The Mystic Vision" in Ken Wilber, ed., *Quantum Questions: Mystical Writings of the World's Great Physicists* (Boston: Shambhala, 1984), 96-102, 98



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## ime in the Garden



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Nikolai Berdeyev, the Russian philosopher, once said that the problem of history, and specifically in regard to Christianity, is “in its philosophic depths a problem of time”.<sup>6</sup> The problem associated with time is in its essence, a problem of inner human destiny. According to Berdyaev:

Our historical time is a sickness, a downfallen eternity (present, past and future). Time makes possible the creativity of the *new*, and creative processes exist in the world because, that there is time. And at the same time, time engenders *angst* (Heidegger) and fear. Our attitude towards the future is defined by fear and hope. With hope for the new, the creative and the better, and fear and terror affront the death-bearing torrents of time.

<sup>5</sup> Abbaye de Fontfroide, Narbonne, France. Photo courtesy of <http://www.sacred-destinations.com>, accessed, 22 February 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Taken from his essay, “Eternity and Time,” trans. Fr. S. Janos, 1999, in *Vechnost’ i Vremya. Bulletin of the Russian Student Christian Movement* (Vestnik RSCM), 3 (1935). [Online] Available: <http://www.berdyaev.com>, accessed 3 March 2008. See also his discussion on time and eternity Nicolai Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, introduction Nemcova Banerjee (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2006), 63-85. See Augustine, *The City of God*, introduction Thomas Merton (New York: Modern Library, 1950), 474, [Book XIV]. See also Gary Eberle, *Sacred Time and the Search for Meaning* (Boston: Shambhala, 2003), 47-74, for his discussion of the dual nature of time in mythology. Time is the destroyer, but also the medium in which creativity occurs. Through time we partake of eternity.

In Christianity, Berdyaev argued, human destiny and human salvation is submerged in a historical timeline linking man's original sin in the beginning (an estrangement from God) to salvation through Christ, as the means by which one can once again become whole. However, this salvation is only promised to a select few after death.

Thus, the attainment of man's final salvation or eternal life is only possible by the completion of history. According to Peter Koslowski this bond between the completion of history and eternal life is a necessary relationship because "everything in the world is made for finiteness and not for eternal life". Continuing his argument, Koslowski claims that the state of eternal life is not possible in a world subject to the laws of thermodynamics and that eternal life requires an "ontological transformation of the world, its complete transformation and transfiguration". Only in terms of a transformed world can the idea of eternal life exists, because if thought of in normal terms, all life is subject to decay and death, as "everything temporal is determined by the passage of time".<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, transformation becomes a basic concept of all religions and is especially true of Christianity whose patterns of transcending death are based on a bodily resurrection and eternal life. For Christianity, according to Koslowski, the "biblical interpretation of eternal life is not that of an exodus *from* the earth, but instead one of an exodus *on* the earth. The biblical interpretation of eternal life is that of an eschatological, ontological transformation of the human person and the earth". In *Being and Time*, Heidegger explains a "horizon of temporality" where time flows from the horizons of the past into the horizons of the future.

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<sup>7</sup> Peter Koslowski, ed., *Progress, Apocalypse and Completion of History and Life after Death of the Human Person in the World of Religions* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Press, 2002), 4-5. See Augustine, 397, [Book XII].



*This time is what is **counted**, showing itself in following, making present, and counting the moving pointer in such a way that making present temporalizes itself in ecstatic unity with retaining and awaiting horizontally open according to the earlier and later.*<sup>8</sup>

Within the parameters of these two horizons, Heidegger places man at the center, the present.<sup>9</sup> But, as Lawrence Fagg explains, “being is much more than a sense of the present: being means *presencing*, that is, letting the present come to be, or “unconcealing” the present. In other words it involves allowing the present to come to fully revealed fruition”.<sup>10</sup> Time moves horizontally from the past towards the future, thus, to ultimate death. Within this timeline, man, in terms of Heidegger’s appropriation of the present, is able to create specific “moments of rapture”, described as vertical time; which are those instances where man is experiencing life to the fullest.<sup>11</sup>

Being placed at the center man occupies an in-between space found between a past and a future, though it is this in-between space that permits him to reach into the past by means of memories and into the future by means of anticipation. However,

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<sup>8</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press), 19. He builds his argument on Aristotle’s definition of time namely that time is “what is counted in the motion encountered in the horizon of the earlier and the later”, or in another translation, time is a “number of motion in respect of „before” and „after”. (*Physics*, IV11, 219b1, quoted in Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 386; *Physics* in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: The Modern Library, 1941), 292.

See also Saint Augustine, *The Confessions* (New York: New City Press, 1997) 295- 302 [Book XI, 14.17], especially pg. 300-301, for his discussion of three tenses of time: the present of past things, the present of present things and the present of future things.

<sup>9</sup> Ernst Cassirer in *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Vol. 3. The Phenomenology of Knowledge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 162-190, claims that theoretical thinking tends to consider time an all-embracing form of change, making flux the basic factor of time and situating its being and essence in its passing away. The past is no more and the future is not yet, therefore the only existence of time that remains is the present as a medium between the no-longer and the not-yet. If true being is timeless, time becomes “no more than a name – a fiction of language and human opinion”.

<sup>10</sup> Lawrence W. Fagg, *The Becoming of Time: Integrating Physical and Religious Time* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 23.

<sup>11</sup> Eberle, *Sacred Time and the Search for Meaning*, 8, 26, 57.

as in-between space, it also allows for those moments when past and future is fused within one single moment of truth, where the “veil of time” is pierced and eternity is brought into the here and now.

Within Christianity, these “moments of rapture” goes hand in hand with an intuition of time as a sacred history of mankind. It is, furthermore, a history not experienced as a past history, but as a “religious history of the future... The whole present, that of man as well of things, must be reborn out of this idea of the future... Just as a new heart is required of man, so there must be a “new heaven and a new earth” – a natural substratum as it were of the new spirit in which all time and change are seen... Their God stands not so much at the beginning of time as at its end; he is not so much the origin of all history as its ethical-religious fulfillment.”<sup>12</sup>

This sequence of new beginnings claims Gerhart Ladner, underlines all historical interpretation, however, early Christianity has impressed its own character on the universal idea of renewal.<sup>13</sup> Sin and death could be overcome by divine redemption and resurrection. Tracing the origins of the Christian idea of reform back to the core of the Pauline doctrine on the human person’s experience of newness in Christ early Christianity focused on a personal renewal, which according to Genesis “had been received by man in creation, but had become impaired by sin”.<sup>14</sup> As Pannenberg

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<sup>12</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, Vol. 2. Mythical Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 1-2.

<sup>13</sup> Gerhard B. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers*, revised edition (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959), 1-2. See also Wolfhart Pannenberg, “The Progress and End of History: Life after Death and the Resurrection of the Human Person in Christianity,” in Koslowski, ed., *Progress, Apocalypse and Completion of History and Life after Death of the Human Person in World Religions*, 80-88, for his argument that the history of the human race as an irreversible course of events directed towards and future end originates from a theology of history. He argues that the Christian’s completion of history began with Jesus Christ and that it had not yet reached its conclusion, which would be only for a select few, in the Kingdom of God.

<sup>14</sup> Alan F. Segal, *Life after Death: A History of the Afterlife in Western Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 399-595, offers a detailed discussion on how Paul developed a concept of divinity of Christ as well as the transformation that occurs to believers of Christ.

points out, the Christian future hope focuses completely on God and the communion of the believer with him. It is his relationship with the eternal God that guarantees a future life beyond death, thus the act of creation finds its completion in the act of resurrection of the dead.<sup>15</sup>

Discussing the idea of time in the medieval mindset, Jacques Le Goff and Julia Barrow state that the Middle Ages did not only confuse heaven and earth, but treated them as a spatial continuity. They also treated time as merely a moment of eternity, where time belonged only to God and could only be lived out. God's time was continuous and linear; it had a beginning in creation and ended in the Last Judgment. Time was history and history had direction. Although it was a downward slope of decline, within this slope there were rare favored moments that cut into linear time, such as the Incarnation, where chronology became "pregnant with the whole history of salvation".<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, within this flow of sacred history, the monastery became the center of religious life as it allowed for the monk to become part of this historical forward-looking ideology of religious fulfillment. Through a process of penance and meditation the monks partook in their own destiny. Within the cloister they could experience a new presencing, a poiesis, a merging of horizons and a recovery of the permanence of their own eternity.

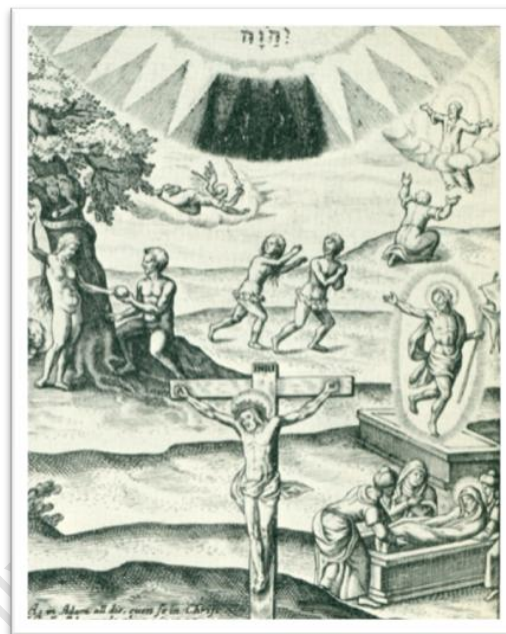
According to Giles Frazer, the Church Fathers understood salvation as being "achieved through some sort of deification, either as becoming God (*theosis*) or at

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<sup>15</sup> Pannenberg, "The Progress and End of History," 87. A similar argument is also taken up by Gerhart B. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*. See also Giles Constable, "Renewal and Reform in Religious Life," in Robert L. Benson and others, eds., *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 37-67.

<sup>16</sup> Jacques Le Goff and Julia Barrow, *Medieval Civilization: 400 -1500* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 165-169.

least becoming like God (*homoiosis theoi*).<sup>17</sup> To be saved was to participate in the divine life". This is a concept that becomes encapsulated by the monastic ideal. Within the monastic environment the natural distrust of human time was waylaid by a focus on eternity as a reward to the followers of Christ. Natural time, which could be experienced as a dimension filled with cruelty and the ultimate sorrow of death, was replaced by a rejoicing of death as a life affirming entity. Lefebvre claims that monks in cloisters "coded" death; they contemplated death and could only contemplate death because they had to "die in the „world" so that the „word" might be fulfilled".<sup>18</sup>



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<sup>17</sup> Giles Fraser, *Redeeming Nietzsche: On the Piety of Unbelief* (London: Routledge, 2002), 48. On pg. 66, he offers an interesting argument based on a "misconceived soteriology of safety". As the given world of change cannot offer safety another ideal world the „real" world is postulated. Therefore, this idea that the "world as it appears to us is *merely* appearance, and that there is another world that for some can be perceived beyond appearance and where the conditions are conducive to our salvation is that which cements Christianity and metaphysics in mutual dependence. This "other world" overcomes the problem of becoming at the expense of life itself. The price of safety is death". See also Brian Daley, "Eschatology in the Early Church Fathers," in Jerry, L. Walls, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 91-109, which focuses on the church fathers' thoughts on the early Christian hope concerning the end of the present history and the beginning of God's Kingdom.

<sup>18</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 254.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Fletcher, *The Historie of the Perfect-Cursed -Blessed Man* (1629), in Stanley Stewart, *The Enclosed Garden: The Tradition and the Image in Seventeenth-Century Poetry* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), Fig. 38.

By entering the monastery, Roberta Gilchrist maintains, its inhabitants experienced death twice. The first time was when the monastic„s vows signal the death of the his/her former life and the second, their later physical death. Therefore, the physical and psychological spaces the monks inhabited can be considered as liminal, it stands as a threshold between the secular and the divine, as well as between this world and the next.<sup>20</sup>

Even though the monastery, in its entirety, can be considered a liminal space, it is the enclosed monastic garden as symbol of Paradise which becomes the ultimate threshold to a timelessness bounded by time. It is an intermediary space, which becomes part of that space, Ibn Arabī, calls a *barzakh*, something that “stands between and separates two other things, yet combines the attributes of both”.<sup>21</sup> In Chittick’s words:

The cosmos is two worlds and the Presence is two Presences, though a third Presence is born between the two from the totality. The first Presence is the Presence of the absent, and it possesses a world called the “world of the absent”. The second presence is the Presence of the sensation and the witnessed; its world is called the “world of the witnessed” and it is perceived by eyesight, while the world of the absent is perceived by insight. That which is born from the coming together of the two is a Presence and a world. The Presence is the Presence of imagination, and the world is the world of imagination. It is the manifestation of meanings in sensory molds... That is why the Presence of the imagination is the most all-embracing of Presences, because it brings together the two worlds – the world of the absent and the world of the witnessed.

<sup>20</sup> Roberta Gilchrist, *Norwich Cathedral Close: The Evolution of the English Cathedral Landscape* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005), 241.

<sup>21</sup> William C. Chittick, *Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Metaphysics of the Imagination: The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 14. See also William C. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God Principles of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Cosmology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 331-370 on the meaning and uses of *Barzakh*. See also Thomas Ryba, “The Idea of the Sacred,” in Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, ed., *From the Sacred to the Divine* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Press, 1994), 37 for a discussion of the mediating role of the imagination as not being located in cognition or in perception but in a third place which is neither exclusively rational or irrational, which Tymieniecka calls the *Imaginatio Creatrix*.

During specific moments of experience the cloister garden allows a person a glimpse of the truth, while simultaneously enabling him the means to acquire knowledge of the self as well as knowledge of God. In Arabī's thoughts, the garden, as intermediary space, stands between God as creator and the subject as spectator. The garden stimulates the creative imagination and as a virtual screen it reveals knowledge about the garden of Paradise. As Schopenhauer would argue, the phenomenal world is the world as it is experienced by the subject, but to gain insight into the noumenal world, the world as it is in itself (similar to Plato's theory of Perfect Forms), requires a stepping out of the bonds of time by means of a mystical or aesthetic experience.<sup>22</sup>

The cloistered garden becomes a representation of the extreme ideal of otherworldliness and as such features as an important "emblem of meditative life". The cloister encapsulates the ethic of *contemptus mundi* and is, therefore, closely related to the idea of solitude. It focuses the attention on the link between the transience of the garden and death's call, both necessary in eternity's ultimate triumph over time. The garden, in lieu of Ibn Arabī's *barzakh*, becomes physically and allegorically filled with the visual reminders of God's promised paradise. The garden offers the "perfect image of regeneration" and so becomes "the ideal point of departure for the soul's ascent to perfection... the garden performed a function

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<sup>22</sup> Stewart, *The Enclosed Garden*, 131, discussing the use of garden imagery in medieval thought, points to a similar idea, but links it to the Platonic vision of the universe. "From the standpoint of imagery, the many are now pushed into the few, and the few into the One. For behind the allegorizing principle, which ostensibly divides the text into many meanings, is the Platonic vision of the universe, which holds that man's limited view of the manifold forms of reality veils the true glimpse of the One Form which embraces them all. The distinction between time and timelessness is simply another way of stating the formula for the division between physical manifestation and Ideal Form". See also note 164. Furthermore, Plato's description of the soul's journey of ascent towards full participation of the ultimate forms, in definite spiritualized language influenced the later Neo-Platonic philosophers such as Plotinus and Christian thinkers, such as Augustine. Salvation becomes an ecstatic encounter with the real, a contemplative ideal by which all forms are seen for what they are.

strikingly similar to that of *Biblia pauperum* and *Speculaum*.<sup>23</sup> It was a surrogate Bible, the basis of experiences which prompted the immediate apprehension of the truth of scripture”.<sup>24</sup>

As *barzakh*, the garden asked for a full participation of the senses in the process of devotion, since focusing sense experience upon the garden, as symbol of Paradise, allowed not only for a revelation of its divine mystery, but also a participation of its life-giving energies. The meditative mind of the monk confronting the enclosed garden of the cloister in its conceptual and physical form was allowed a flexible understanding of history. In the context of the enclosed cloister garth history becomes prophecy. This garden presents a “surface to the senses and an opportunity for an experience which may function as a prelude to a deeper experience, one which will define the former – and more – illuminate the meaning of human existence”.<sup>25</sup>

Sense experience and spiritual exercises become a means of „presencing” the monk in the moment of time and the enclosed cloister garden, as a proleptic eschatological landscape outside of time, offered the perfect milieu for an inner remaking and renewal of the soul.

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<sup>23</sup> Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric and the Making of Images, 400-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 68-69, argues that the medieval boundary between memory and imagination is fluid. In monastic idiom the Last Things, death, Heaven and Hell are remembered by making a “mental vision or “seeing” of invisible things from the matters in his memory”. Furthermore, the sources of this remembering are both literary and sensory.

<sup>24</sup> Stewart, *The Enclosed Garden*, 115-116.

<sup>25</sup> Stewart, *The Enclosed Garden*, 132, 140.

## Sense Experience in the Garden

There came to me a delicate, but at the same time a deep, strong and sensuous enjoyment of the beautiful green earth, the beautiful sky and sun; I felt them, they gave me inexpressible delight, as if they embraced and poured out their love upon me. It was I who loved them, for my heart was broader than the earth; it is broader now than even then, more thirsty and desirous. After the sensuous enjoyment always came the thought, the desire: That I might be like this; that I might have the inner meaning of the sun, the light, the earth, the trees and grass, translated into some growth of excellence in myself, both of the body and of mind; greater perfection of physique, greater perfection of mind and soul; that I might be higher in myself.<sup>26</sup>

Susan Ashbrook Harvey, in her thought-provoking book, *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory*, starts her exposé with the argument that the cultures throughout the ancient Mediterranean regions had a common understanding which prevailed that “sensory experience carried effective power for good and for ill in physical, social, and political terms; further that sensory experiences carried cosmological significance, ordering human life within the cosmos”. These orientations towards specific sensory experiences were utilized and reconfigured as “instruments by which to construct experiences, practices, and meanings that would yield a distinctly Christian worldview and identity in the midst of the huge and variegated population that interacted in the Mediterranean regions”. Human experience was placed within a Christian horizon and a religious epistemology of embodied experience was formulated.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Jefferies, *The Story of My Heart*, 58.

<sup>27</sup> Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 1-2. See Chapter Two, note 71 for a discussion on views that sensory information collected through the senses are culturally orientated. Joy Monice Malnar and Frank Vodvarka, *Sensory Design* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 56, claim that perception is an integrated system of sensation and interpretation, whose “outline, shape and meaning are the product of learned cultural inference. Thus the fundamental sensations...provide the raw materials for a response influenced by context”



As previously stated, early Christianity developed a concept of divinity of Christ together with a transformation that happened to believers in Christ. This transformation secured immortality; it is a resurrection in a future life of a redemption already received by Christ in the past. Thus, Christianity developed a “notion of a self in transformation, which attained transcendent status at the end of time, but, was continuously realizing it in the present”.<sup>28</sup> Time was to be experienced physically, not only as a movement towards death, but as a continuous experience, in the moment, of God’s mercy through Christ.

Giles Constable argues that the Christian mind had to be remade, transforming the person’s essential nature, a process that needed to be renewed inwardly every day.<sup>29</sup> In the early Church baptism and penance were ceremonies of renewal and rebirth, however, entrance into the monastic life was thought of as the ultimate means by which men/women could experience God. Ascetic life was seen as a means to return, in the present, to the promised paradise of the future, while simultaneously restoring the paradise that was lost in the past. This was a “backward to forward looking ideology of reform”, which made use of different images and techniques to transform and reconstruct the mind, to produce in the present a future which had little resemblance to its past. Janet Coleman talks about a practice of memorialisation, which produced an “edifying „remembrance of things past” leading to a new knowledge attained by “the gracious virtue of the forgetfulness of self”.<sup>30</sup> In Coleman’s words:

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<sup>28</sup> Segal, *Life after Death*, 438-439.

<sup>29</sup> Constable, “Renewal and Reform in Religious Life,” 37.

<sup>30</sup> Janet Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories: Studies in the Reconstruction of the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 116.

If memory and understanding require likeness or images which represent their objects to the soul, the aim of the monastic mediator is to use such images as signs or „speakings“ to attain what is ultimately ineffable and unimaginable...the final end monastic memory was meant to serve was oblivion.<sup>31</sup>

Within this distinctive religious epistemology, sensory experience was used to feed memories, while simultaneously erasing them to produce new memories of transcendence. Monasticism functioning on a deep distrust of the sensual, visible world, found different ways by which to integrate and reform sense experiences into a new sensio-religious epistemology. By means of a metaphorical exegesis of the sacred texts, Christian writers, especially Bernard of Clairvaux and Augustine, fused the memories of sensed and transient experience with the idea of the unalterable truth of eternity, into a new sensual vocabulary of paradise as a locus for an inner sense experience of transcendence.<sup>32</sup> In this dynamic monastic program of renewal of the soul, sense experience was centered on a ritual remembrance and re-enactment of the soul's journey to God and eternity.

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<sup>31</sup> Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories*, 155-156.

<sup>32</sup> Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, *Honey and Salt: Selected Spiritual Writings of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux*, ed. John F. Thornton and Susan B. Varenne, preface Thomas Merton (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), 273-274. Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, 854-855, 859-864 [Book XXII]. Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories*, 155-191, for the use of sensory language and experience in the service of creating new memories; David Chidester, *Word and Light: Seeing, Hearing and Religious Discourse* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992) for a discussion of the eyes and ears in religious discourse; Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, "Introduction: Erudite fascination and Cultural Energies: How Much Can we Know about the Medieval Senses?," in *Rethinking the Medieval Senses*, Stephen G. Nichols, and others, eds. (Baltimore: JHU Press, 2008), 1-10, for a discussion of the tendency in the Middle Ages to combine different concepts and arguments from different philosophico-theological traditions in a stage of transition between sensual perception and abstract thought; Harvey, *Scenting Salvation*, 105- 114 on a discussion of the Christian senses in a Christian world; Gordon Rudy, *Mystical Language and Sensation in the Later Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 2002), wherein he argued that the Christian writers used sensory language based on ideas about physical sensation and ideas about the structure of the human person, which would allow a person to know God and be one with Him; Eugene Vance, "Seeing God: Augustine, Sensation and the Mind's Eye," in Nichols, Kablitz, Calhoun, eds., *Rethinking the Medieval Senses*, 13-29, for his discussion on Augustine's notion of sensation which involves that which transpires across the threshold between material body and immortal being of soul; Michel Zink, "The Place of the Senses", in Nichols, Kablitz, Calhoun, eds., *Rethinking the Medieval Senses*, 93-101.

Mary Carruthers in *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric and the Making of Images, 400-1200* introduces the concept of orthopraxis, which emphasizes a set of experiences and techniques, conceived as the „way“ to be followed. In her words:

Because it seeks an experience, an orthopraxis can never be completely articulate; instead of normative dogma, it relies upon patterns of oral formulae and ritualized behaviour to prepare for an experience of God, should one be granted.<sup>33</sup>



34

Monasticism can, therefore, also be considered as a particular way of living; it is the “craft of making prayer continuously” through the “constant meditation based on reading and recollecting sacred texts”. By the early monks it was called “*mneme theou*”, “the memory of God”....Monastic meditation is the craft of making thoughts about God”. This monastic practice of meditation involved the making of mental images through the “mixed” use of verbal and visual media” and their “often synaesthetic literature and architecture”. By means of an exegesis of Biblical tropes

<sup>33</sup> Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 1-2, 3. She explains that the difference between *mneme* and *mimesis* is that *mneme* produces “art for “thinking about” and for “meditating upon” and for “gathering””.

<sup>34</sup> San Damiano, Italy, Photo courtesy of <http://www.sacred-destinations.com>, accessed 22 February 2009.

and figures, especially the rhetorical trope of the Garden of Paradise and the enclosed garden of the Song of Songs, a monastic art for mneme (memory) developed. Essential to this craft of thinking was the idea of patterned movement, either in silent meditation or in liturgical ritual.<sup>35</sup>

The religious program of the monastery manifests a spiritual vision by engaging or disengaging the senses, edifying the mind and leading the soul back to the world of spirit. It becomes a specific environment of phenomena which supports the imagination, nourishes religious experience and conveys religious truths.<sup>36</sup>

In this environment memory and imagination are crucial elements in determining the quality of the place; it locates experience within a Christian spatio-time construct. The enclosed cloister garden, as the most sacred space within the monastery, becomes both witness and performer in the drama of salvation. It becomes a “private, materialize escape, giving the sense of a physical, felt, absolutely tangible place for floating free of the “real” world outside the garden”.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 55. On ritual, see Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) and especially her book *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 155-159, where she argues that activities that express the sacral significance of key symbols are ritual-like action. Ritual-like action is, therefore, thought to be that type of action that best responds to the sacred nature of things and that it effectively creates the sacred. The sacrality evoked in those symbols points to something beyond themselves and this sacrality can also be attributed to places and buildings. She also discusses the quality of invariance, used in meditation its goal is a forgetting of the self. See Henri Geerts, “An Inquiry into the Meanings of Ritual Symbolism: Turner and Pearce,” in Hans-Gunter Heimbrock and H. Barbara Boudewijnse, eds., *Current Studies on Rituals: Perspectives for the Psychology of Religion* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1990), 18-52, on the meaning of ritual symbols. See Yi-Fu Tuan, *Passing Strange and Wonderful* (Washington, D.C.: A Shearwater Book, 1993) 109-114, for his discussion on symbols and sacred space. Within the rectilinear walls of the monastery garden the center becomes transcendent as it symbolically introduces the idea of summit. Moving inward from the outward wall one not only moves inward but also upward. Furthermore, this link to the transcendent is enforced by myth.

<sup>36</sup> E. V. Walter, *Placeways: A Theory of the Human Environment* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 75.

<sup>37</sup> John Dixon Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture* (London: The MIT Press, 1992), 95, 291.

E.V. Walter talks about haptic perception in architecture, as a way that the whole body senses and feels the environment.

It is a sense of touch that means not just contact with the fingers or skin but an entire perceptual system conveying sensations of pressure, temperature, pain and the sense of movement within the body as well as the feelings of the body moving through space... Haptic perception reminds us that the whole self may grasp reality without seeing, hearing, or thinking. It also calls attention to a primitive way of knowing that resembles mythical thought, in contrast to the analytical stages of seeing, thinking, and acting – a unified structure of feeling and doing.<sup>38</sup>



39

The monastic cloister garden reflected, through metaphor and form, an eschatological paradise. Within this fixed material site imagined space carried with it a quality of sensibility as the infinite nature of eschatological space became compressed within a theological discourse of movement towards God.

<sup>38</sup> Walter, *Placeways*, 134. See also Malnar and Vodvarka, *Sensory Design* 42-44 for their discussion of haptic perception and visual perception, 103-128 on haptic perception and movement which also involves time; Tuan, *Passing Strange and Wonderful*, 35-95, 165-166, argues that the senses under the direction of the mind gives a world, and that the position and movement of our bodies produce a proprioception or kinesthesia, the somatic awareness of the basic dimensions of space. Thus, movement is proof of life. He furthermore, claims that the proximate environment is experienced multimodally; what is close can be touched, tasted, smelled, heard and seen.

<sup>39</sup> Moissac Abbey, France. Photo courtesy of <http://www.sacred-destinations.com>, accessed 22 February 2009.



40

The garden offers a limited quantity of visual information: a fountain, four areas of grass, mass of columns. These are subject to a hierarchical composition of unremitting repetition. The columns are decorated with sculptures which tell a story. The building shuts out all sound and invokes a beneficent silence. Inside it is dark, with light entering the garden from above and percolating into the adjoining rooms.<sup>41</sup>

In the enclosed garden of the cloister, through symbol and analogy, God becomes the Divine architect. The garden is a proportionally ordered system where all monastic life can coincide in a "liturgy which captures space and time in a rhythm that reflects divine order". Within the bounded space of the enclosed garden the rhythm of the seasons, of day and night, is experienced not only physically, but they become apparent in the division of tasks and the sequence of texts, chants and prayers in the masses and processions.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Abbey of Saint- Hilaire, France. [www.picasaweb.com](http://www.picasaweb.com), accessed 22 February 2009.

<sup>41</sup> Rob Aben and Saskia de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden: History and Development of the Hortus Conclusus and its Reintroduction into the Present-day Urban Landscape* (Rotterdam, 010, 1999), 54.

<sup>42</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 53. See also Megan Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings: Thirteenth-Century English Cistercian Monasteries* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 58-65, for a description of specific processions and rituals taking place within the Cistercian cloister. These processions reiterate the idea of Christian life as a journey, where the ultimate destination is Heaven.



43

The cloister garth, literally, becomes a timepiece, as the shadows cast by the walkway columns, work like the hands of an enormous clock, telling time with considerable accuracy.<sup>44</sup> This enhances the monk's routine, linking processional time to silent meditational time, linking physical and spiritual experience in one continuous rhythm of encountering God.<sup>45</sup>

Here the medieval Christian thought constructs that brought order to nature converge in a square horizontal plane with a central point and axial cross, surrounded by a gallery. The autonomy, centric configuration and unity of the garden and the movement around it create a microcosm. The garden is an enclosed, finite space, organized round a tree or spring yet forming part of the infinity of natural space: the sky.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Moissac Abbey, France. Photo courtesy of <http://www.sacred-destinations.com>, accessed 22 February 2009.

<sup>44</sup> John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Berkeley, 1934), 156, claims that rhythm is a universal scheme of existence, underlying all realization of order in change and as such it pervades all the arts. Man only succeeds when he adapts his behavior to the order of nature.

<sup>45</sup> Mick Hales, *Monastic Gardens* (New York: Stewart, Tabori and Chang, 2000), 25. See also Eberle, *Sacred Time and the Search for Meaning*, 77-85 for his discussion on monasticism, their history and ideas on time; Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 272-276, for her discussion of the cloister as memory machine, but also her reference to the experience of sunlight as it moves through the cloister as an aid for illuminating specific carved scenes.

<sup>46</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 54.





47

The miniature world of the monastic garden, or the *hortus contemplationis*, is a reflection of a spiritual, harmonious world. It allows for those means necessary to reconcile oneself with one's earthly existence. The closed off world of the cloister garden becomes a "ritual, the creating of space for reflection. In the abstraction of the geometry, the spatial form and the image, it is not the tangible aspect of paradise or of nature that is rendered, but the idea".<sup>48</sup>

Real reality will only be seen when one is able to see beyond the forms of the enclosed garden, thus, salvation lies in the soul's journey of ascetic contemplation, to reach its ultimate destination in God. Similarly, Schopenhauer argued that human existence has a phenomenal aspect, a life lived in time. However, to transcend this world and become part of that which underlies and pervades our phenomenal existence, an individual has to step outside these boundaries of time, piercing the

<sup>47</sup> Moissac Abbey, France. Photo courtesy of <http://www.sacred-destinations.com>, accessed 22 February 2009.

<sup>48</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 58. See also David Chidester and Edward Tabor Linenthal, eds., *American Sacred Space* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 10 for their discussion of the human body's role in the ritual production of sacred space and the contribution of embodied movement towards a distinctive experience of the sacred.



veil hiding the truth of things, and this can only be done through mystical or aesthetic perception and contemplation.<sup>49</sup>



50

Within the cloister gardens the visual information provided by the forms not only encapsulates the archetypes associated with paradise, but through an immediately sensed encounter they convey a religious message of baptismal rebirth. Terry Comito in his description of monastic life as an attempt to return to paradise explains this baptismal return as a double action.<sup>51</sup> Firstly comes the death of old Adam through participation in Christ's sacrifice and secondly a rebirth in water and spirit, represented by the fountain of life. Thus, in the physical form of the garden the underlying symbolism is immediately sensed and becomes quite literally an embodiment of all the forces latent in the space of the garden. This sense of place gives rise to the garden as a place of man's own coming to birth and has been passed on along with the forms that incarnate it.

<sup>49</sup> Fraser, *Redeeming Nietzsche*, 52, 60.

<sup>50</sup> Moissac Abbey, France. Photo courtesy of <http://www.sacred-destinations.com>, accessed 22 February 2009.

<sup>51</sup> Terry Comito, *The Idea of the Garden in the Renaissance* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1978), 48-50.

The cloister garden engages the senses only in its suggestiveness of God's presence and His abode in eternity.<sup>52</sup> Physical experience is transposed through movement around the cloister into a personal experience, a pilgrimage of the soul. Movement along the cloister allows, simultaneously, for prayer to take the form of an inner movement of "reconstruction of place in the imagination, to a meeting of God in the human heart". In the cloister garden palpable place becomes the starting point for contemplation, but through this multisensory awareness of the environment, the imagination is led beyond and through the physical form towards God alone.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> See also Michel Zink's essay "The Place of the Senses," 93-101, for his discussion of the *locus amoenus* as a place of pleasure but a place also where time is suspended and the senses saturated. Important here, for the cloister garden, is his reference to the paradox found in the awareness of an ungraspable moment of perception, known as the present moment. The garden becomes a place of fusion between the subject and Nature. The garden, as a place of constant change reminds the subject of his bond to the laws of nature, but in the peaceful delight of the moment, time stands still. It is, however, only a fleeting repose. Arthur Schopenhauer, *Essays and Aphorisms* (London: Penguin Classics, 1970), 51-54, touches on a similar argument, when he discusses the vanity of existence and comes to the conclusion that "even sensual pleasure itself consists in a continual striving and ceases as soon as its goal is reached". Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories*, 184, claims that promised spiritual delights are expressed in sensual terms. These descriptions are not only describing the heavenly Paradise but they are also available to those in the monastery. Harvey, *Scenting Salvation*, 223, argues that the early Christian writers explored sensory experience as a vehicle for gaining knowledge of the Divine. In this process, Christianity's afterlife gained a thickly detailed geography which becomes more than only a map of spaces, but one where depictions, of the afterlife relied on sensory qualities to evoke supposed experiences of eternity. They developed a religious culture which assumed human experience of the divine should be mediated through the body, which allows for an understanding of human expectation of the life to come through bodily sensations. This placed emphasis on the body as a sensory, sensing entity that matters. She asserts, that even though monasticism has as an impulse to stringent ascetic practices, the rich sensual language of exegesis allows for the belief that every experience, physical and figurative had its meaning in relation to the expectation that resurrected life would be sensory known and experienced. Human experience extended beyond the confines of the physical, mortal body and the physically finite world. See also Rudy, *Mystical Language and Sensation in the Later Middle Ages*, on how medieval writers used sensory language to articulate how a person could know God.

<sup>53</sup> Beldon C. Lane, *Landscapes of the Sacred: Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality*. (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1988), 249.



54

Therefore, not only is the enclosed garden a reflection of the Heavenly Paradise, but it is also closely connected to the idea of time. The fleetingness of the garden forms reminds man of his impending death, while allegorically the wall, tree or fountain reveal the true meaning of the incarnation as the beginning of a new everlasting life. Paradoxically, although the earlier Garden of Eden has, because of man, fallen apart and was restored by the Incarnation, it will not flourish in its full perfection until time has ended. However, in the cloister garden, nature in its continual rhythms of death and rebirth are experienced sensually, in the moment, by means of a sensual and kinesthetic sensory experience of the total environment; the smell of new grass after rain, the coolness of the evening after a hot day, the morning sun after a dark night, the quiet peace after a thunderstorm, the play of shadows when moving through the cloister, but always an unhindered view upward towards the heavens. It becomes a constant reminder of the inner soul's journey to rebirth in God.

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<sup>54</sup> Moissac Abbey, France. Photo courtesy of <http://www.sacred-destinations.com>, accessed 22 February 2009.

As an inner pilgrimage, movement through the cloister allows for the past and the future to be “extraordinarily flattened into a present”.<sup>55</sup> Moving through the arcades of the cloister, the sensual, visible world becomes transformed, through myth and memory, into an experience of timelessness. This brings about, as Susan Ashbrook Harvey argues, the intersection of the limited and limitless realms; through this sensed encounter the human person encounters concreteness in the ritual context and is filled with eschatological hope.<sup>56</sup>



57

The monastery is configured as a chain of effectively independent spaces whose autonomy is underscored by the thickness of the walls and by the gallery. Its solid buildings are welded together by the unbroken rhythm of the gallery, a transparent length of columns and *arcades*. The gallery is the linking element that to the building represent the „indoors“ of the building. To this end the massive stone floor and rear end wall present a contrast with the openness of the sky and

<sup>55</sup> Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories*, 186.

<sup>56</sup> Harvey, *Scenting Salvation*, 222, 225. Stewart, *The Enclosed Garden*, 98, argues that Christians believed that at given times, unique men, in spite of the fall became “while in the flow of history... „past“ all change, „fast“ in the Paradise of God. If so, they must have partaken in some mysterious way of an experience transcending time...At the roots of the mystical experience one finds almost always an anxious concern with time, which is stilled only by complete submission to the mysterious – experience”

<sup>57</sup> Moissac Abbey, France. Photo courtesy of <http://www.sacred-destinations.com>, accessed 22 February 2009.

the refinement of the columns. In the arcades the relationship between earth and sky is reflected yet again, with the floor representing the earth and the arches the heavenly vault. The gallery ties the „earthly“ to the „heavenly“ in a functional sense too. This is where the monks and nuns spend time after their daily activities, and prepare themselves for worship in the chapel.<sup>58</sup>



59

The garden, as ultimate symbol of the cyclical rhythm of death and rebirth, asks for a full participation of the sensory body. However, sense experience in the cloister garden emphasizes a timeless eternity by means of direct experience of space, through movement.<sup>60</sup> Physical movement around the garden generates a temporal illusion. Looking outward, or forward, is simultaneously also looking at the future, while looking inward is to reminisce about the past, where the beginning becomes at the same time the source, or center of the historical time sequence. Meditative movement in the cloister differs from a sense of purposeful action, which is always a

<sup>58</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 44.

<sup>59</sup> Moissac Abbey, France. Photo courtesy of <http://www.sacred-destinations.com>, accessed 22 February 2009.

<sup>60</sup> See Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 215-217, for his description of the qualities of movement and the involution of time and movement in space. Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 118-129, claims that the experience of space-time is largely subconscious, but that the sense of space is closely related to movement as movement gives a sense to place.



movement through historical time towards a goal, since pacing around the garden negates the awareness of direction, time and space. Time and movement becomes rhythmical, the past flows into the future in a ritual pilgrimage to salvation centered in the present.<sup>61</sup>

The entrances to the gallery are discovered in the corners – in line with the gallery – and it is here that the circling movement begins. In the monastery the most important routes take in the gallery, a fact that underlies its central position. The circulatory movement (the physical relationship) is at right angles to the spatial relationship between building and garden permitted by the spacing of the columns.

The surface of the garden has emblematic significance and the act of perambulation gives shape not to the encounter but to contemplation. This is stressed by the ever repeated framing of the image by the arcade, while the rear wall is solid with its openings in shadow. The distance created by the gallery and the symbolically charged surface particularize the garden as a temenos, a sacred place forbidden to entry.<sup>62</sup>

Megan Cassidy-Welch maintains that in the cloister, “the transcendent meaning of the ritual act was given physical form”.<sup>63</sup> The cloister garden not only becomes the access point between the monastic buildings, but it also becomes the access point to an inner journey of the soul. In her words:

The procession signifies a precise moment in salvation history, imitating and representing what is past. Yet by the performance or playing out of that historical episode, the events are relocated to the present. Further, the journey that takes place around the arcades replicates one that is to come in the future. Historical time is collapsed in the performance of this procession, while the division between eschatological and earthly time is blurred. The cloister as site for this temporal transformation, becomes „holy ground“, where the liturgical life of the monks is infused with memory and with hope.

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<sup>61</sup> Tuan, *Space and Place*, 126-129.

<sup>62</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 54-55.

<sup>63</sup> Cassidy-Welch, *Monastic Spaces and their Meanings*, 60, 63.



64

Here architectural space serves a cognitive purpose as the cloister becomes a tool to “animate recollection and evoke meaning”. On both, the physical and the conceptual plane, the cloister garden represents Christian time and space; it becomes a “cognitive map of liturgy and ritual spaces”.<sup>65</sup> This emphasis on Biblical time, connects past, present and future in a cycle of ritual movement (processions, prayer and meditation) through the cloister garden. The placing and sequence of the architectural pillars engraved with Biblical scenes prompts “monastic memory through the sensory experience of a journey, with movement through space enhancing meditation”. It becomes a “pilgrimage space” within the monastery, where the monks could physically proceed along a route of remembrance and spiritually recollect the ultimate destination of their souls.<sup>66</sup>

In this idea of repetition the finite and infinite are brought face to face. The procession is the ritual re-enactment of an episode from the life of Christ, for

<sup>64</sup> Moissac Abbey, France. Photo courtesy of <http://www.sacred-destinations.com>, accessed 22 February 2009.

<sup>65</sup> Gilchrist, *Norwich Cathedral Close*, 255, claims that the apocalypse cycle and the Last Judgment became a specific location, which meant that they could be revisited and contemplated upon in the present.

<sup>66</sup> Gilchrist, *Norwich Cathedral Close*, 254-255; Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 80.

example the way to Calvary. A single occurrence such as this becomes an unbroken process by joining the beginning and the end into the perambulation about a fixed central point: finitude of time and space coincide and are given physical form in the gallery. The paradox of this ritual of the procession round the garden is that on the one hand it has a fixed order with a beginning and an end (corresponding to melody), and on the other it is endless and cyclic (*rhythm*). Time seems to stand still, motion and stasis being identical in scenographic terms: the choreography consists of a sequence of images equal value rhythmically strung together. The march of time is manifested not in the changing image but in its repetition and is therefore not linear but cyclic. At the central point all movement seems to have come to a standstill.<sup>67</sup>



68

The contained and bounded space of the cloister reflected the bounded and finiteness of Christianity. Through its architectural forms it represented biblical time as a movement from creation towards death and the world as a divinely created space. Liturgical and personal rituals through the cloister forged, within a Christian temporality, connections between the past and the future.<sup>69</sup> These movements

<sup>67</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 55.

<sup>68</sup> Moissac Abbey, France. Photo courtesy of <http://www.sacred-destinations.com>, accessed 22 February 2009.

<sup>69</sup> Gilchrist, *Norwich Cathedral Close*, 256.



integrated physical and cosmological space, allowing for the remembrance of death as a joyful tool to salvation.

Haptic perception of the cloister garden involves a full experience of the environment; the sounds of chanting, singing, or murmuring prayers mingling with the sounds of nature (wind, thunder, water), the smell of incense and the smells of the garden (grass, rain), the sights of carved reliefs and bosses, catching the light from the garden, the feel of the stone, water, heat and cold and inner peace and tranquility. Most importantly, however, is the impression that for that period in time all experience is focused on the moment, a moment where time is experienced as standing still.<sup>70</sup> In the physical environment of the enclosed garden the monks participated in a concrete and constant interaction between experiences within the present and notions of a future life by means of bodily, sensory encounters. According to Susan Ashbrook Harvey, the monks, fusing metaphorical interpretations of paradise and the sensual body and physical sense experience, trained their bodies as instruments for gaining knowledge of God. In her words:

Sense perception and bodily sensation could and did cross the boundaries of the spaces, times, and domains that separated human and divine lives, or present and future dispensations. Hence ancient Christianity shaped its understanding of the end of time and the final resurrection through a constant referencing of bodily sensory experience as the guide for how and what to expect in the life to come...[it] had as its telos the cultivation of revelatory expectation.<sup>71</sup>

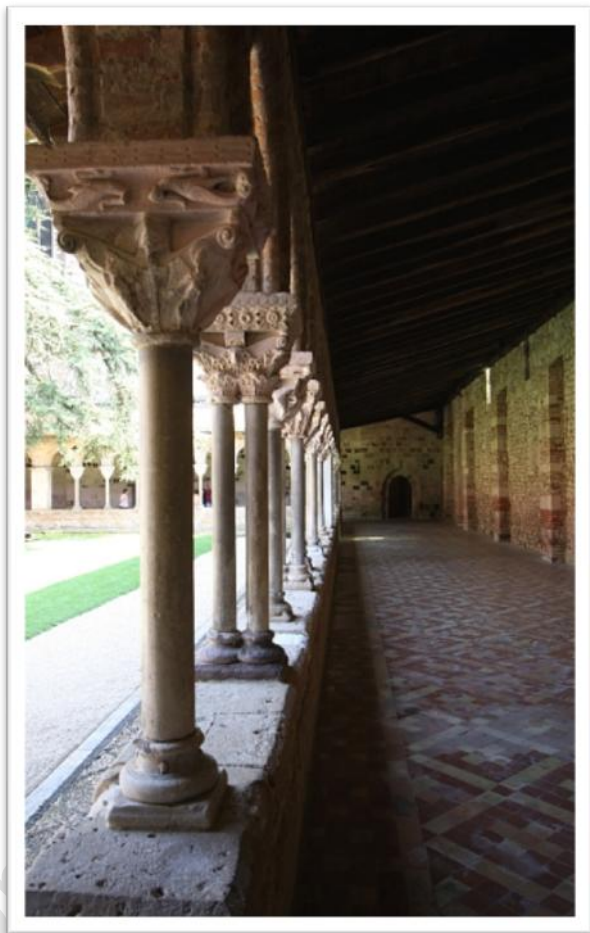
In this environment sensory-ritual experience stands as a threshold between the sacred and the profane. Sense experience in the enclosed monastery garden is more than only a metaphorical glimpse of those experiences that await the believer in the Paradise of God; it is the vehicle that transports the monk/nun in the

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<sup>70</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 56.

<sup>71</sup> Harvey, *Scenting Salvation*, 229.

monastery to fully experience God in the presence of the moment. This experience transforms the enclosed garden of the monastery into a proleptic eschatological landscape outside of time.



72

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<sup>72</sup> Moissac Abbey, France. Photo courtesy of <http://www.sacred-destinations.com>, accessed 22 February 2009.

# Spiritual Exercises

For as he who is seen is immutable in himself, he is present immutably to all who contemplate him; to these there is nothing more enticing that they could see. Can their eager appetite, then, ever grow weary, or that sweetness ebb away or that truth prove deceptive, or that eternity come to a close? And if both the ability and the will to contemplate are prolonged eternally, what is lacking to total happiness? Those who contemplate him without ceasing are short of nothing, those wills are fixed on him have nothing more to desire.

This approach is not a movement from place to place but from brightness to brightness, not in the body but in the spirit, as by the Spirit of the Lord; evidently by the spirit of the Lord, not by ours, although in ours.

But there is another form of divine contemplation ... it takes place in the interior, when God himself is pleased to visit the soul that seeks him, provided it is committed to seeking him with all its desire and love.

...At such an hour he will find himself locked in the arms of Wisdom; he will experience how sweet divine love is as it flows into his heart. His heart's desire will be given to him, even while still a pilgrim on earth, though not in its fullness and only for a time, a short time.<sup>73</sup>

Pierre Hadot defined spiritual exercise as the means by which an individual "raises himself up to the life of the objective Spirit; that is to say, he re-replaces himself within the perspective of the Whole („Become eternal, by transcending yourself").<sup>74</sup> For Hadot the object of spiritual exercises is a profound transformation of the individual's mode of seeing and being, it is a philosophy that exists in a specific art of living. In his words:

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<sup>73</sup> Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, *Honey and Salt*, 127-138.

<sup>74</sup> Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, introduction Arnold, I Davidson, trans. Michael Chase (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 82-84, discusses spiritual exercises, as a philosophy by referring to two different philosophical schools. Firstly the Stoics, who argue that attention to the present moment is the key as it allows a person to accede to cosmic consciousness and, therefore, making him attentive to the value of each instant. Secondly, there are the Epicureans, who place emphasis on meditation and memory by contemplating on the physical world and focusing the imagination on the infinite. As both this chapter and previous chapters have argued, both these trains of thought can be found in the spiritual exercise of the monks in the monastery.

It is a concrete attitude and determinate lifestyle, which engages the whole of existence. The philosophical act is not situated merely on the cognitive level, but on that of the self and that of being. It is a progress which causes us to *be* more fully, and makes us better. It is a conversion which turns our entire life upside down, changing the life of the person who goes through it. It raises the individual from an inauthentic condition of life, darkened by unconsciousness and harassed by worry, to an authentic state of life, in which he attains self-consciousness, an exact vision of the world, inner peace and freedom.

Placed within the Christian tradition of Monasticism spiritual exercises are closely connected to the idea of reform, which is explained by Gerhart Ladner as “the idea of free, intentional and ever perfectible, multiple, prolonged and ever repeated efforts by man to reassert and augment values pre-existent in the spiritual-material compound of the world”.<sup>75</sup> Even though, as mentioned before, the early concept of reform in Christianity has a Pauline origin, with different interpretations added to it by the Church fathers, one underlying thread runs through all these discourses: death. Linked with Christianity’s eschatological belief in eternal life after death was the belief of renewal of man in God: man has, firstly, to die in Christ for him to be born again in Christ.

According to Ladner, the fountainhead of early Christian mysticism was centered on a pre-eschatological return to Paradise, its focus an anticipation in this life of the mysteries beyond death. Underlying man’s mystical return to paradise was the aspiration for a spiritual return even before death to man’s original sin-free state.<sup>76</sup>

What is now invisible and veiled in the sacramental order will in eternity be open to view and to experience, Mysticism anticipates this eschatological experience. It is a participation in the experience of God enjoyed by Adam in Paradise and, at the same time, in that of eternity. In this participation in the paradisiac and eschatological experience, mysticism is in harmony with the universal Christian

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<sup>75</sup> Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, 35. See also the qualifications he attached to his definition of reform.

<sup>76</sup> Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, 66-68.

concept of mankind: man in this world is a wanderer expelled from the Paradise of Adam; in Christ he finds his way back home once more thrown open to him; there even more glorious gifts than those he lost through Adam are waiting for him. Mystical experience gives him now on earth a foretaste of the joys of the paradise of Christ, the second Adam.<sup>77</sup>

Essential to this idea of mystical foretaste was the notion of a self that was remade in the eyes of God. Monasticism represented the pinnacle of Christian perfection and for Pierre Hadot it could be portrayed as a “*philosophia*”.<sup>78</sup> It acquired a specific style of life and it carried a spiritual attitude and tonality focused on specific spiritual exercises. Quoting Jean Leclercq, Hadot claims that philosophy in the monastic Middle Ages was a way of living according to reason, a “lived, experienced wisdom” and not a designated theory or means of knowledge. It was an attitude of attention, where an attentive person lived constantly in the presence of God, is constantly remembering God, “joyfully consenting to the will of universal reason, and he sees all things with the eyes of God himself”.<sup>79</sup>

Gerardus van der Leeuw asserts that constant regard to the sacred is the chief element in man’s relationship with the extraordinary.<sup>80</sup> Thus, to pay attention becomes, in his arguments, the key element in religion; it is also the key element in the monk’s religious life. The monk who continually aims to be in the presence of God requires a man who is constantly in attention, not only in regard to the sacred but also to himself. This attention to oneself presupposes, according to Hadot, a

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<sup>77</sup> Anselm Stolz, *The Doctrine of Spiritual Perfection*, introduction Stephen Fields (New York: Crossroad, 1938), 53.

<sup>78</sup> Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 129-138.

<sup>79</sup> Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 221. It is a doctrine already found in Augustine’s thoughts, that the form of things, that is creation, or the sensible created aspects of the world, can help in man’s reformation towards God. Everything in the universe has some likeness to God and man, when meditating upon them; man can be led beyond them by their aesthetic forms. His epistemology relies on an understanding of the value of human experience. The monk knows God by remembering Him. Ladner *The Idea of Reform*, 184; Segal, *Life after Death*, 585; Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories* 90-104.

<sup>80</sup> Gerardus van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation: A Study in Phenomenology*. Vol. 1 & 2, trans. J.E. Turner (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 49-50.

vigilant and continuous concentration on the present moment, a moment which must be lived as if it were simultaneously the first and last moment of life.<sup>81</sup>

Although, the aim of the monastic reform was the overcoming of sin (past) and death (future) by divine redemption, attention to the present moment becomes the central motif in man's vigilant concentration on God. It is in these privileged moments that man finds himself overwhelmed with power and it is then when the distance between image and thing or subject and object disappears.<sup>82</sup> Concentrating and recognizing the value of the present moment causes that moment to be experienced with an intensity that allows the person to enter into a liminal time, a sacred time, where past and future is flattened into one continuous present. Just for a moment the person is lifted away from the normal flow of history and into the timeless realm of eternity.<sup>83</sup>

This experience of time involves, within Christianity, a continuous focus on those symbols and rituals that places man in a relationship with God.<sup>84</sup> It demands

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<sup>81</sup> Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 131-132.

<sup>82</sup> Comito, *The Idea of the Garden in the Renaissance*, 21-32; Eberle, *Sacred Time and the Search for Meaning*, 65.

<sup>83</sup> See Eugene G. D'Aquili and Andre B. Newbergs, "Religious and Mystical States: A Neuropsychological Model" in *Zygon*, 28, 2 (June 1993): 177-200; D'Aquili and Newbergs "The Neuropsychology of Aesthetic, Spiritual and Mystical States" in *Zygon*, 35, 1 (March 2000): 39-51, in these two papers they establish a neuropsychological model for mystical states. In the later paper they also bring to the fore the importance of the observing self. "The incorporation of the sense of the observing self, to one degree or another, is essential to most spiritual-mystical states...The whole point of most spiritual-mystical experiences is for the self to have a sense of being fundamentally and essentially related to some aspect of whatever ultimate reality might be". Important here is his arguments that mystical states can be induced by religious ritual stimulated by the senses; See also H. Rodney Holmes, "Thinking about Religion and Experiencing the Brain: Eugene D'Aquili's Biogenetic Structural Theory of Absolute Unitary Being" in *Zygon*, 28, 2 (June 1993):201-215, for a rebuttal on the claims made by Eugene D'Aquili, but also emphasizing the significance of D'Aquili's theories.

<sup>84</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Towards Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 102-103, 109 argues that "ritual is, first and foremost, a mode of paying attention. It is process for marking interest...It is this characteristic, as well, that explains the role of place as a fundamental component of ritual: place directs attention... [it] serves as a focusing lens, establishing the possibility of significance by directing attention, by requiring the perception of difference". He makes another interesting point, asserting that there is a "gnostic" dimension to ritual.

constant meditation on God and, therefore, requires all available means of rhetoric and architectural constructs to mobilize all possible resources of the imagination.<sup>85</sup>

Within the monastery the cloister garden is filled with religious symbolism and is, as argued in previous chapters, a ritual space drawing the monks into a remembrance of God as creator of the first paradise in Eden, but also of the final paradise in His Kingdom. Rituals and symbolism within the garden carry strong emotional power and in its representation of Paradise, it keeps “the sensorium – the body’s total sensory intake – focused on the object or rite, which is to say on the timeless, impersonal realities they represent... and direct our focus toward a sense of greater unity”. Dedicated attention on the form of the garden lifts the garden out of its fixity into a *barzakh*. It is an intermediate zone which is entered through a liminal, or threshold state of consciousness, engendered by ritual experience. The enclosed garden as site for ritual transcendence offers a “unique way to cross thresholds of human consciousness. By providing a time out of time, a gateway to eternity, the ritual moment permits us to incorporate the past and to open ourselves to the integration of the present and the future”.<sup>86</sup>

The past has gained steadfastness  
The present is alive beforehand  
The Instant is eternity.<sup>87</sup>

Discussing this poem of Goethe, Hadot makes valuable observations concerning Goethe’s idea of the living moment. For Goethe the “present instant is perceived as a grace which is accorded to us or as an opportunity we are offered”.<sup>88</sup> It can be argued, however, that Goethe’s living moment finds its echo in the encloistered

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<sup>85</sup> Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 133.

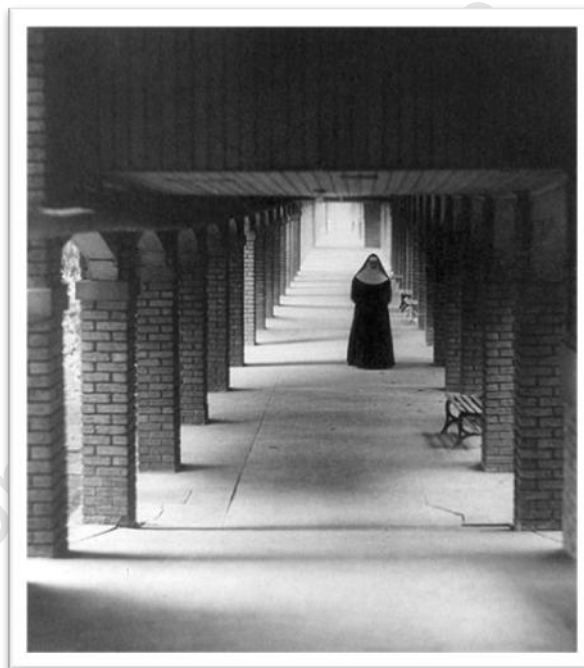
<sup>86</sup> Eberle, *Sacred Time and the Search for Meaning*, 67, 69.

<sup>87</sup> Goethe, “The Testament”, quoted by Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 233.

<sup>88</sup> Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 231-235.

garden. The enclosed garden of the monastery, as archetype of paradise, becomes not only the ultimate locale to capture the value of the present moment, but in itself it offers itself up to interpretation and insight. Within its boundaries it contains, similarly to the present moment, both past and future in a constant cycle of transformation.

In the enclosed garden the progress of time is irrelevant. The chronology of past, present and future is extinguished, and eternity and the moment seem to coincide. There, linear time cedes to cyclic time. Instead of succession of images marking the passing of time there are only the constant repeating rounds of day and night, spring, summer, autumn and winter, an endless cycle. Static space materializes stationary time. Time and space are one. The materiality of the garden again is an illustration of these two sides to timelessness: cyclic time and changelessness.<sup>89</sup>



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For Goethe the eternal is a process of becoming where the instant moment becomes the symbol of eternity. Similarly, the enclosed garden of the cloister is paradise, a place for growth and becoming and, thus, also a symbol of eternity. The garden, just

<sup>89</sup> Aben and de Wit, *The Enclosed Garden*, 222.

<sup>90</sup> Nun in cloister, Doris Ulmann, ca.1930, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nun>, accessed 22 February 2009.



as the instant, becomes as symbol, a living revelation of that which lies beyond explanation, the “inexpressible mystery at the basis of nature and all reality. It is its very fleetingness and perishable nature that makes the instant [garden] the symbol of eternity, because its ephemeral nature reveals the eternal movement and metamorphosis which is, simultaneously, the eternal presence of being”. However, underlying the instant moment and the garden are constant thoughts of death; “for life itself is perpetual metamorphosis and, inseparably, the death of every instant”.<sup>91</sup>

In order to find himself in the Infinite  
The individual willingly accepts to disappear.  
It is a pleasure to abandon oneself.<sup>92</sup>

Similarly, the monk in the cloister is in a process of transformation. He has to abandon himself in the moment, through a constant remembrance of death. This is done by focusing upon those symbols and rituals that encapsulates those very ideas and provides him with an inner knowledge of God. Here, the cloister garden becomes a form of knowledge as grass and vegetation suggest the infinite and inevitable cycle of life and death – germination, growth, blossom decay. Fiona Griffiths asserts that it is the very fertility of paradise that carries a specter of sin and death which is also the consequence of disobedience to the will of God.<sup>93</sup> There lies a twofold significance in the monastic garden which evokes both life and death through its physical layout as well as a promise of resurrection. Just as the tree physically reminds of death, it symbolically links heaven and earth providing psychologically a ladder for the monk on his journey upwards to God. For Griffiths,

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<sup>91</sup> See Earle Coleman, *Creativity and Spirituality: Bonds between Art and Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 123-124 for his discussion of the garden's role in understanding the incessant changes of life within a milieu engendering permanence. In the aesthetically experienced permanence of the garden, it becomes a metaphor for the eternality of God.

<sup>92</sup> Goethe, “Eins und Alles”, quoted by Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 233.

<sup>93</sup> Fiona J. Griffiths, *The Garden Of Delights: Reform and Renaissance for Women in the Twelfth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 140.

the garden juxtaposes sin with salvation and it is this reminder that focuses the monk on his own struggle to become new.

Through an aesthetic or mystical experience, the underlying symbolism of the garden can be grasped, but it is an act which involves a complete new mode of perception. It is, as Schopenhauer would argue, an act of contemplation that requires a change in the subject enabling him to move beyond mere everyday perception, bounded by time and space, into a pure selfless subject of knowledge.<sup>94</sup>

The monk, just like Schopenhauer's subject, has to shed his own individuality, cast off his own selfhood and personality, in a process of becoming a reformed subject of knowledge. In the moment of contemplation, the monk, just as the aesthetic self, will be able to perceive the Idea in its true form, free of the bonds of time and space and experience a moment of truth.

This thought finds its echo already in the epistemology of Augustus when he argues that the truth of the past is the same as the truth of the present and will also be so for the future, for truth has no temporal dimensions. The meaning of past and future experiences are, in the present, grasped by the mind's inner eye, a knowledge only available to those in a rare moment of self-forgetting.<sup>95</sup>

Hadot talks of *prosoche* and *apatheia*; remembrance of God becomes the essence of religious attention - *prosoche*, but, in spiritual exercises a close link develops between *prosoche* and the human will. Hadot argues that *prosoche* implies a mastery of the self, it asks for a triumph of reason over passions, an attention to the

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<sup>94</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*. Vol. 1, trans. E.F.J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1969), 169, 176-180, 187.

<sup>95</sup> Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories*, 100, 186.

self that would result in spiritual perfection. Spiritual perfection entails the annihilation of the monk's own will; it is *apatheia*, the complete absence of passions.

The Kingdom of Heaven is *apatheia* of the soul along with true knowledge of existing things.<sup>96</sup>

Spiritual exercises in the monastery imply training for death. It was an attempt to gain immortality in the here and now by a willful separation of body and soul which could only be achieved by a constant remembrance of death and a forgetting of the self. "Thus to train for death, or to separate the soul from the body, was at the same time to participate in the death of Christ. To renounce one's will was to adhere to divine love".<sup>97</sup>

The garden, physically and allegorically, becomes a very fertile ground for the focus of the monk's reform. The enclosed cloister garden has the unique ability to penetrate the mind and to create, not only a liminal space, but, also a liminal time. In its very nature the paradox between the need for permanence and the only surety of permanence, found after death, hangs in a delicate balance. Through these lenses, the garden of the cloister is seen for what it is; the paradise of God and in the monk's spiritual journey of reformation, it becomes a proleptic eschatological landscape outside of time.

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<sup>96</sup> Evagrius of Pontis, *Praktikos* 2, quoted in Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 136

<sup>97</sup> Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 133-140.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Conclusion

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Well did the Wisest of our time write: "It is only with Renunciation (*Entsagen*) that Life, properly speaking can said to begin."

I asked myself: What is that, ever since earliest years, thou hast been fretting and fuming, and lamenting and self-tormenting, on account of? Say it in a word: is it not because thou art not HAPPY? ....Foolish soul! What Act of Legislature was there that *thou* should be Happy? A little while ago thou hadst no right to *be* at all. What if thou were born and predestined not to be Happy, but to be Unhappy! ...Close thy *Byron*; open thy *Goethe* „*Es leuchtet mir ein*, I see a glimpse of it!" cries he elsewhere: there is in man a Higher than Love of Happiness: he can do without Happiness, and instead find Blessedness! Was it not to preach forth this same Higher that sages and martyrs, the Poet and the Priest, in all times, have spoken and suffered; bearing testimony, through life and through death, of the Godlike that is in Man, and how in the Godlike only he has Strength and Freedom? ....the Self in thee needed to be annihilated. By benignant fever-paroxysms is Life rooting out the deep-seated chronic Disease, and triumphs over Death. On the roaring billows of Time, thou art not engulfed but borne aloft into the azure of Eternity.<sup>1</sup>

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In those rare and precious moments when we wholly open ourselves to our vibrant surroundings, time and space take on a different appearance and seem to reveal a deep essence of integration. The living "now" assumes a pervasive immanence; we are in tune with the Eternal Now. Our surroundings, our space, become the universe in the sense that we are totally at peace with our place in it and feel a full relation to it, all of it. In effect, we are a microcosm of the universe; all space and time are distilled into the "here" and "now".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus: The Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdröckh* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1846), 148

<sup>2</sup> Lawrence, W. Fagg, *Two Faces of Time* (Wheaton: Quest Books, 1985), 157, quoted in Lawrence W. Fagg, *The Becoming of Time: Integrating Physical and Religious Time* (London: Duke University Press, 2003), 161.

Goethe once wrote that:

Man, that self-contented wonder,  
Seeks his own self-preservation  
Whether here on earth or yonder.<sup>3</sup>

This idea finds its echo in Malcolm Quantrill's observation that only man is conscious of his own mortality. He further states that "consciousness of a limited life span, that begins in such frailty and is of uncertain duration, causes us to construct frameworks of relationships and continuity in which we can have only a fleeting part".<sup>4</sup> Therefore, juxtaposed against the continuity of existence is the continual movement of different generations through the annals of time; generations who are in a constant process of interpretation, evaluation and discernment.

According to Quantrill, traditions within this history are carried forward in two ways. Firstly, there are those traditions carried forward by means of the "written word", the recorded "myth and legend, pragmatism and poetics, scientific fact and philosophical speculation, as well as the ephemera of music, drama and dance." Secondly, there are those traditions representing those ideas, in concrete images, landscapes and built forms. He, furthermore, claims that the first "offers evidence of man's consciousness of himself and his condition in the form of discourses, plays and poems; the other mirrors the consciousness of passing generations in buildings, paintings, pots, pans and jeweled remembrances."

It can be argued, then, that underlying these forms are frameworks which do not "depend upon its visible perceivable elements alone; there may also be an underlying metaphysical or ritual order that is not immediately apparent in the form,

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<sup>3</sup> Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe, "Higher and Highest Matters", in *Selected Poetry* trans. David Luke (London: Penguin Books, 1999), 179.

<sup>4</sup> Malcolm Quantrill, *Environmental Memory: Man and Architecture in the Landscape of Ideas* (New York: Schocken Books, 1987), xiii-xiv.

but, is carried by its hidden of “fourth dimension” of mythical and cultural memories”. Consequently, the enclosed garden as a representation of a specific idea in concrete form exists within detailed frameworks, which hold those types and ideas that shape and give meaning to it.<sup>5</sup>

Returning, however, to Goethe’s statement, that man seeks preservation, here and after death, it should be assumed that representational frameworks also extend into those landscapes that are perceived to exist outside the natural history of man. It may, thus, be useful at this stage to ponder for a moment on the relationship between framework and the landscapes it frames.

For Quantrill there exists a linguistic dimension between spaces; “the dialogue between real spaces, how that dialogue connects us to a spatial framework, and thence to those spaces in the landscape of ideas that stretch beyond the material limits of form”.<sup>6</sup> This dialogue forms the bridge between man’s intention and desire to move beyond the material world of facts towards the spiritual world of ideas. Within these frameworks symbolic representations of ideas are placed and navigated.

It portrays the essential human need to extend the limitations of body and habitat through the realm of ideas. It also perfectly summarizes the role of architecture in its occupation of the *Zwischenraum* (“space between”) the inside and the outside, the private and public, the profane and the sacred.

Any landscape, therefore, can partake of this dialogue, dialogues that would frame a multitude of new innovative panoramas, structured by myths, philosophy and theology and by which the spirit of man can be broaden, since it provides him with glimpses of more than one world.

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<sup>5</sup> Quantrill, *Environmental Memory*, 57.

<sup>6</sup> Quantrill, *Environmental Memory*, 59-65.

In the garden, however, it must be remembered the built forms do not stand in isolation for it is people who are the primary movers; their responses are direct, sensory and complex. The architectural experience of the garden is an exploration not only of ideas but in its totality.

Beginning with a journey through architectural space [garden] we leave behind material form and explore a path through the labyrinth of reconstructed memories into a new poetic landscape which is symbolic as it is real. Such an extraspatial dimension of architecture [garden], by opening windows on a landscape that extend beyond perception, unleashes the latent energy store of architecture [garden] – *its expression of consciousness*.<sup>7</sup>

This brings us in a full circle back to the concept of interpretation. The thesis was that the enclosed garden is a proleptic eschatological landscape outside of time. This argument was proved by placing the enclosed garden within the framework of the monastic cloister and analyzing it in terms of idea, place and experience. Proving this argument required an exercise in hermeneutical interpretation, but it should also be kept in mind that these interpretations, in themselves, were reflections upon other exercises of interpretation.

The enclosed garden of the monastery carried with it a superabundance of meanings which required from the monk his own imagination and interaction. The ritual-architectural event becomes for the monk a heuristic activity in which he tries to make sense, not only of his environment, but also of that which awaits him after death. Although, the enclosed garden offers him a hermeneutical framework, he only finds its full meaning by partaking in the ritual-architectural event offered by the garden. As ritual participants the monk and garden engage in an interactive dialogue of ideas and thoughts. They become partners in a dynamic exchange; the monk

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<sup>7</sup> Quantrill, *Environmental Memory*, 58.

bringing to the garden all his pre-understandings, conceptions and expectations, steeped in a Christian tradition of myths and symbols and the garden providing the spatio-architectural forms that give meaning to those myths and symbols, thus, to any event taking place within its spaces.<sup>8</sup>

Although, the enclosed garden is a liminal space, the monk does not stand isolated from this space, but participate in it and is he, through his senses, taken “into the liminality, a *mundus imaginalis*”, a special place in the imagination that is similar to the enclosed garden, neither inside nor outside, infinite nor finite and neither human nor otherworldly.<sup>9</sup> For Jones this requires a complete involvement from the participant in the ritual-architectural event which could lead to “a significant loss of control, surrendering cautious disinterest and exposing themselves to the as yet unknown consequences”.<sup>10</sup> This commitment leads to an experience which involves an abandonment of the self, in which, to use Gadamer’s terminology, an increase of being takes place. In the experience of the garden, the garden is not “an object that stands over against a subject for itself”. Rather it has its “true being in the fact that it becomes an experience that changes the person who experiences it”.<sup>11</sup>

Consequently, according to Quantrill, this conversation generates a kind of metaphysical energy between the material world and the world beyond ourselves, but which we inhabit with our ideas and spiritual values.<sup>12</sup> For the monk in the

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<sup>8</sup> See Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Continuum, 1975), 102-130 for his discussion of the hermeneutical process as similar to the concept of a game played. Both partners are active participants in the game.

See also Lindsay Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison. Vol. 1. Reflections on the Eventfulness of Religious Architecture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 51-56, for his application of Gadamer’s game metaphor in an individual’s experience of architecture. Gerardus van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation: A Study in Phenomenology. Vol. 1 & 2*, trans. J.E. Turner (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 317.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Moore, *The Re-Enchantment of Everyday Life* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1996), 99.

<sup>10</sup> Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture*, 53.

<sup>11</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 103.

<sup>12</sup> Quantrill, *Environmental Memory*, 63.



cloister garden its meaning and even the very “being” of the garden, “emerges (and lasts) only within the respective confines of the performative occasions” in which that garden participates.<sup>13</sup> The garden and the monk, together, are participants in this journey, a pilgrimage towards “the country of the soul”.<sup>14</sup> Through prayerful attention to the particular meaning of the garden forms and the integration of these forms into a ritual-architectural experience the soul of the monk is lifted up and transported. In that moment he loses all sense of time and self; time is annihilated and the garden is, for him, a proleptic eschatological landscape outside of time.

Yes, this inward life will create an outward aspect: the abstractly realistic life will demonstrate itself in outward life and thereby in all outward aspects: the new man will then find his outward aspect and thereby his complete happiness.<sup>15</sup>

The academic joins this hermeneutical conversation as the third partner, bringing to it her own characteristic prejudices, expectations and understandings. Lindsay Jones explains:

[W]e have to realize that as scholars of sacred architecture we are entering into hermeneutical dialogue, not simply with buildings, but with *occasions*, which are already hermeneutical dialogues in themselves. In other words, scholars should be questioning and listening for answers that issue not directly from built forms... but instead form already conversational exchanges...In this hermeneutics of sacred architecture, the interpreter aspires to a participatory role in an indigenous conversation that is already underway.<sup>16</sup>

It has already been shown that the monk’s indigenous experience with the garden should be thought of as a dynamic and interactive dialogue, a dialogue, which the academic observer enters, when she commits herself to interpreting and understanding those indigenous experiences. This exchange of ideas focuses a shift

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<sup>13</sup> Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture*, 52.

<sup>14</sup> Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, 317.

<sup>15</sup> Piet Mondrain, “De Stijl”, Exhibition Catalogue 65, in Quantrill, *Environmental Memory*, 64.

<sup>16</sup> Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture*, 56.

away from a search for definite meanings towards an appreciation of the always multiple, ever-changing and shifting usages and apprehensions of these ritual-architectural experiences.<sup>17</sup>

Therefore, it is possible to explain the role of the enclosed garden in the life of the monk by using Schopenhauer's theories on aesthetic and mystical experience as a heuristic tool. This will allow the enclosed garden, with its superabundance of meanings, to be interpreted as a work of art, inducive to aesthetical experiences.<sup>18</sup>

In this process it becomes a vehicle in which the particular and the universal merge allowing new truths to become known, thus, bringing about, for a moment, the disclosure of that which is unchanging and eternal. In aesthetic contemplation the monk leaves behind his individuality and all normal forms of knowledge, turning into a pure subject of knowledge which would enable him to perceive the eternal, unchanging Idea behind the external forms. Behind the forms and symbols of paradise in the garden, he will, for a moment, perceive and experience the real Paradise of God.<sup>19</sup>

The enclosed garden of the monastery, as landscape art, opens itself up to be experienced and in this experience the "wheel of time" is stopped for a moment by the positive act of dwelling or lingering on the garden.<sup>20</sup> This results in the monk

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<sup>17</sup> Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture*, 56.

<sup>18</sup> See David Chidester, "Aesthetic Strategies in Western Religious Thought" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 51,1 (March, 1983): 55-66. In this essay he argues for recognition that in the lived reality of experience, judgments are simultaneously religious and aesthetic and that they are both important dimensions of religion

<sup>19</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*. Vol. 1, trans. E.F.J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1969), 187, 178-179.

<sup>20</sup> Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*. Vol. 1, 185, 197.

becoming lost in the garden, whereby, for a moment, through a “fullness of the senses” he participates in the history of his own salvation.<sup>21</sup>

Lütke-meier explains Schopenhauer’s moment of aesthetic contemplation, although only lasting for a moment, as eternal.<sup>22</sup> It becomes eternal in the sense that both object and subject are outside of time for this moment, a moment wherein the eternal Idea is revealed and the subject discovers his own being as a “painless, timeless, subject of knowledge”.<sup>23</sup> Being free from all forms of knowledge, according to Schopenhauer, also makes the person free of the form of time for the duration of this aesthetic experience. As time alone is responsible for change and, therefore, also for the desire and hope for a better tomorrow, hopes which will eventually cause unhappiness, time needs to be stopped and this can only occur in an aesthetic or mystical experience. For Schopenhauer, the aesthetic experience takes place outside of time and as such grants the perceiver the freedom of time.

Massimo Venturi Ferriolo captures this essence beautifully when he talks of the “sacredness of the eternal present”.

In this way the original relationship that existed between harmony and the divine becomes visible, immortal, constantly present, the Platonic cornerstone that .... Plutarch defined as *visible and flowing* – existing outside of time while at the

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<sup>21</sup> Paolo Bettio, “Adam in Eden: The Difficult Discernment of the Perfect Life,” in *The Earthly Paradise The Garden of Eden from Antiquity to Modernity*, F. R. Psaki, ed. (Binghamton: Global, 2002), 55-74.

<sup>22</sup> See also Thomas Lütke-meier, *Chez Soi: The Aesthetic Self in Arthur Schopenhauer, Walter Pater and T.S. Eliot* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2001), 40-48; 103-110, for his discussion on Schopenhauer’s ideas on aesthetics, the subject and time. Nicolai Berdyaev, “Eternity and Time,” trans. Fr. S. Janos, 1999, in *Vechnost’ i Vremya. Bulletin of the Russian Student Christian Movement* (Vestnik RSCM), 3 (1935). [Online] Available: <http://www.berdyaev.com>, accessed 3 March 2008, 3 wrote that only in the creative act of man, the authentic meaning of history in its inner change could be realized. Hans Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. and ed. David E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 104 claims that the “distinctive mark of the language of art is that the individual art gathers into itself and expresses the symbolic character that, hermeneutically regarded belongs to all things...the work of art is the absolute present for each particular present, and at the same time holds its word in readiness for every future”.

<sup>23</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*. Vol. 1, 179.

same time forming part of it. We may also view this as a reaching out for the infinite and the eternal...In the constant tension of the present, the subject *subjugates* him- or herself to the object (I-Landscape), to nature, or more precisely to the rediscovery of the oneness into which one is absorbed.<sup>24</sup>

The aesthetic quality of the cloister garth feeds the imagination as it creates a world that embraces the fleeting nature of human life, while simultaneously offering man the means to contemplate a paradise beyond a landscape situated in time.

Art projects the ephemeral figure of mankind, that living being beyond the landscape of time. Space and time therefore open up existence and the aesthetic experience of a tension that makes visible the “before” and the “after”, granting us knowledge of the process of becoming within the frame of eternity. It is the tension of the originaive harmony of creation unfolding in three acts: not yet (the future), no longer (the past), and now (the present)...The *occurring* is that which “takes place” and reveals its specific, local identity through our reading of it, beginning with the present and projecting toward the past or into the future. Its comprehension requires thought processes that – like landscapes – have no regard for boundaries and focus on places of every form and aspect, testing their depths, entering into their spaces and opening new perspectives: a powerful gaze like a luminous ray coming from afar that can shed light both on what has happened and on the unknown still to come.

In the act of contemplation and meditation the monk achieves the power to observe the true essence of the enclosed garden. In this moment the rapport between monk

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<sup>24</sup> Massimo Venturi Ferriolo, “Cardada by Paolo Burgi: The Experience of Gaze,” in *Contemporary Garden Aesthetics: Creations and Interpretations*, Michael Conan ed. (Washington DC, Dumbarton Oaks, 2007), 203, 205, 209, 218-219. See also Earle J. Coleman, *Creativity and Spirituality: Bonds between Art and Religion* (New York: New York State University Press, 1998), 35-36, for his discussion of the “eternal present” as a lived experience, where one by fully participating in the moment achieves a “living immortality in which what is immediately present has displaced all concern for the past and the future”. See also Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge Classics, 1985), 51 for his discussion of the experience of the present as providing a sense of existence. Yi-Fu Tuan, *Passing Strange and Wonderful: Aesthetics, Nature and Culture* (Washington, D.C.: A Shearwater Book, 1993), 221-222 argues that art has a degree of permanence as it is able to bridge the “continually widening chasm between past and present...The evanescent moment, to those who truly see, evokes paradoxically a conviction of the eternal...Experiencing and knowing this conjunction of incommensurables alters the way we perceive the universe”. Things perceived, under these circumstances, acquire “the authority of a quasi-mystical presence. Our sense of value, our moral outlook, is altered thereby”.

and garden becomes transcendent and the garden in its true role as proleptic eschatological landscape outside of time is unveiled. For a moment, the eternally sacred and eternally present co-exist, affording the monk a condition of human existence that realizes his desire for meaning and his longing for ultimate happiness.

Through this aesthetic experience the monk is carried along on a spiritual journey, or in Tymieniecka's thoughts, a movement of the soul towards transcendence. A movement she also links to her idea of inward sacredness.<sup>25</sup> For her inward sacredness means an escape from the narrow confines of personal existence in time to a higher world of timelessness. The garden becoming part of the creative act has the power to "grasp the change-filled, death-bond beauty of life at the crossroads where being and transience meets." It transforms the fear of death into a joyful anticipation, where life and death appears as the ultimate parts of the same continuum and the present moment is linked to eternity where past, present and future merge into a single evolving totality.<sup>26</sup>

Eternity only consists of unique present moments, moments which – after long periods of germination – thrust their roots into blind and deaf matter and spread their branches and proceed through the work of time. These moments (which have passed through the filter of our personal experience) traverse our unique spiritual route and attach themselves to the first designs of the Creation before all time. Moments live, and we live through them. Our destiny is established by them. Our destiny, ineffaceable, causes this life to enter gloriously into all eternity.<sup>27</sup>

However, the question now arises of what consequence this conversation, concerning the enclosed garden as proleptic eschatological landscape outside of

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<sup>25</sup> See Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, *Logos and Life: The Three Movements of the Soul*, Book 2 (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Press, 1988), 143-180.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Ryba, "The Idea of the Sacred," in *From the Sacred to the Divine*, Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, ed. (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Press, 1994), 86.

<sup>27</sup> Tymieniecka, *Logos and Life: The Three Movements of the Soul*, 178-180.

time, holds for the greater discourses on religion. For an answer, perhaps we should return once again to Goethe.<sup>28</sup>

Only mankind  
Can do the impossible:  
He can distinguish,  
He chooses and judges,  
He can give permanence  
To the moment.

The *hortus conclusus*, not only through symbol and analogy, but through its spatio-architectural framework, allows man to do the impossible. Firstly, by interpreting and engaging with the garden the monk distinguishes, chooses and judges those experiences that would allow him to transcend death and live a meaningful life and secondly, by reconstructing and interpreting those experiences the academic distinguishes, chooses and judges how the enclosed garden becomes a medium for psychological transcendence. As Mario Jacoby so succinctly states; it is always a search for the self and in the image of Paradise, encapsulated by the *hortus conclusus*, the self, as a symbol of the true center, has the inner possibility of integrating all the various possibilities associated with happiness, truth and immortality.<sup>29</sup>

However, giving permanence to the moment needs a commitment, an engagement off all parties involved. Jones talks of a process of interpretation and interaction conceived as “participatory involvements in conversation-like” occasions between interpreter and the perceived ritual-architectural environment.<sup>30</sup> This „I-garden“,

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<sup>28</sup> Goethe, “Divinity”, *Selected Poetry*, 55

<sup>29</sup> Mario Jacoby, *Longing for Paradise: Psychological Perspectives on an Archetype* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1985), 208.

<sup>30</sup> Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture*, 48.

conversation-like engagement, finds its resonance in the timelessness of the I-Thou relationship, found in Martin Buber's thought.

The present – not that which is like a point and merely designates whatever our thoughts may posit as the end of “elapsed” time, the fiction of the fixed lapse, but the actual and fulfilled present – exists only insofar as presentness, encounter, and relation exists. Only as the You becomes present does presence come into being.<sup>31</sup>

The sacred, or that which is perceived as sacred, is found in the moment, Tymieniecka explains this communication with the sacred as not so much a concern with discovering a truth, but more with receiving, interpreting and adopting it. For her, communication inserts itself in all encounters with the sacred and hence, into man's spiritual advancement. It becomes “at the same time the means and the end” of all experiences with the sacred.<sup>32</sup> As a result an encounter with the sacred cannot exist without a participating „I“, in dialogue with a contributing „You“; it is this engagement that becomes, in its very core unique, as only it can give permanence to the moment.

I conclude, thus, a hermeneutical interpretation of the enclosed garden revealed it as an essential partner in a discourse on death and „ultimate happiness” found in the timelessness of the moment. Furthermore, by presencing itself in the here and now of this conversation, it becomes timeless: a proleptic eschatological landscape outside of time.

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<sup>31</sup> Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans., prologue and notes Walter Kaufmann (New York: Touchstone, 1970), 63. See also pp. 125-126 for his discussion of the supreme encounter, only possible for a human being who has become whole. Buber argues that in the emerging from the supreme encounter man is no longer the same as before the encounter as he has received a presence as strength and is filled with meaning, 157-158. See also Fagg, *The Becoming of Time*, 161-164 for a brief discussion of the moment in Buber's thought. He claims that no one, but Buber, so “cogently articulates how the moment challenges us to expose ourselves to its depth with total, vulnerable openness”.

<sup>32</sup> Tymieniecka, *Logos and Life: The Three Movements of the Soul*, 136-140.

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<sup>1</sup> Father Jerome Tupa, "Cloister Garden," San Miguel Arcángel

<sup>2</sup> Father Jerome Tupa, "Cloister Garden and Fountain," San Fernando Rey de España. Both photos courtesy <http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/mission/index.html> accessed 28 April 2009.